This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

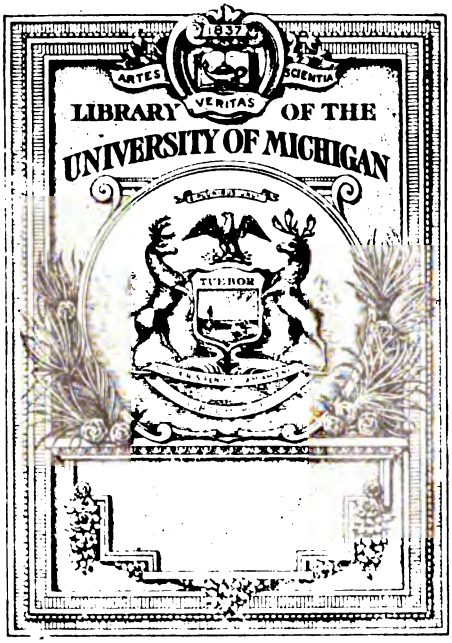
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

No. 23.
Z. EASTMAN.
1835.



THE GIFT OF
Sidney C. Eastman

828
M[illegible]
J2
v.2

THE

WORKS

OF

HANNAH MORE,

WITH

A SKETCH OF HER LIFE.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY J. J. WOODWARD,
No. 7 MINOR STREET.

1832.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

HINTS FOR FORMING THE CHARACTER OF A YOUNG PRINCESS.

Page.

Chap. I—Introductory Chapter, 6
Chap. II—On the Acquisition of Knowledge, 7
Chap. III—On the importance of forming the Mind, 10
Chap. IV—The Education of a Sovereign a Specific Education, 12
Chap. V—Importance of Studying Ancient History, 16
Chap. VI—Laws—Egypt—Persia, 17
Chap. VII—Greece, 19
Chap. VIII—Rome, 22
Chap. IX—Characters of Historians, who were themselves concerned in the transactions which they record, 25
Chap. X—Reflections on History—Ancient Historians, 28
Chap. XI—English History—Mr. Hume, 29
Chap. XII—Important Æras of English History—Alfred—King John—Henry VII., 31
Chap XIII—Queen Elizabeth, 33
Chap. XIV—Moral Advantages to be drawn from the Study of History, independent of the examples it exhibits—It proves the Corruption of Human Nature—It demonstrates the superintending power of Providence—Illustrated by Instances, 35
Chap. XV—On the Distinguishing Characters of Christianity, 38
Chap. XVI—On the Scripture Evidences of Christianity. The Christian Religion peculiarly adapted to the Exigencies of Man; and especially calculated to supply the Defects of Heathen Philosophy, 41
Chap. XVII—The use of History in teaching the Choice of Favourites—Flattery—Our Taste Improved in the Arts of Adulation—The Dangers of Flattery exemplified. 46
Chap XVIII—Religion necessary to the Well-Being of States, 49
Chap. XIX—Integrity the true Political Wisdom, 53
Chap. XX—On the True Arts of Popularity, 56
Chap. XXI—The importance of the Royal Example in promoting Loyalty—On False Patriotism—Public Spirit, 59
Chap. XXII—On the Graces of Deportment—The Dispositions necessary for Business—Habits of Domestic Life, 60
Chap. XXIII—On the Choice of Society—Sincerity the bond of Familiar Intercourse—Liberality—Instances of Ingratitude in Princes—On raising the tone of Conversation—And of Manners, 61
Chap. XXIV—On the Art of Moral Calculation, and forming a Just Estimate of Things and Persons, 64
Chap. XXV—On Erroneous Judgment—Character of Queen Christina of Sweeden—Comparison of Christina with Alfred, 67
Chap. XXVI—Observations on the Age of Louis XIV. and on Voltaire, 69
Chap. XXVII—An examination of the Claims of those Princes who aspired to the appellation of the GREAT, 72
Chap. XXVIII—Books, 76
Chap. XXIX—Of Periodical Essay Writers, particularly *Addison* and *Johnson*, 79
Chap. XXX—Books of Amusement, 82
Chap. XXXI—Books of Instruction, 85
Chap. XXXII—The Holy Scriptures—The Old Testament, 87
Chap. XXXIII—The Holy Scriptures—The New Testament, 89
Chap. XXXIV—On the abuse of Terms—Enthusiasm—Superstition—Zeal for Religious opinions no proof of Religion, 92
Chap. XXXV—The Reformation, 96
Chap. XXXVI—On the importance of Religious Institutions and Observances—They are suited to the nature of Christianity, and particularly adapted to the character of Man, 98
Chap. XXXVII—Of the Established Church of England, 100
Chap. XXXVIII—Superintendence of Providence manifested in the Local Circumstances, and in the Religious History of England, 104
Chap. XXXIX—The same subject continued—tolerant Spirit of the Church—Circumstances which led to the Revolution, and to the Providential Succession of the House of Hanover, 109
Chap. XL—On Christianity as a Principle of Action, especially as it respects Supreme Rulers, 113

CHRISTIAN MORALS.

Chap. I—On the writers of Pious Books, 118
Chap. II—On Providence, 123
Chap. III—Practical use of the Doctrine of Providence, 127
Chap. IV—Thy will be done, 131
Chap. V—On Parable, 134
Chap VI—On the Parable of the Talents, 137
Chap. VII—On Influence, considered as a Talent, 140
Chap. VIII—On Time, considered as a Talent, 144
Chap. IX—On Charity, 146
Chap. X.—On Prejudice, 150
Chap. XI—Particular Prejudices, 154
Chap. XII—Farther Causes of Prejudice, 158
Chap. XIII—Humility the only true Greatness, 160
Chap. XIV—On retirement, 165
Chap. XV—Dangers and Advantages of Retirement, 169
Chap. XVI—An Inquiry, why some Good Sort of People are not better, 172
Chap. XVII—The Inquiry, why some Good Sort of People are not better, continued, 175
Chap. XVIII—Thoughts respectfully suggested to Good Sort of People, 179
Chap. XIX—On Habits, 183
Chap. XX—On the Inconsistency of Christians with Christianity, 188
Chap. XXI—Expostulation with the Inconsistent Christian, 191
Chap. XXII—Reflections of an inconsistent Christian after a serious perusal of the Bible, 195
Chap. XXIII—The Christian in the World, 198
Chap. XXIV—Difficulties and Advantages of the Christian in the World, 200
Chap. XXV—Candidus, 205
Chap. XXVI—The established Christian, 210

AN ESSAY ON THE CHARACTER AND PRACTICAL WRITINGS OF ST. PAUL.

Chap. I—Introductory Remarks on the Morality of Paganism, showing the necessity of Christian Revelation, 217
Chap. II—On the Historical Writers of the New Testament, 221
Chap III—On the Epistolatory Writers of the New Testament, particularly Saint Paul, 224
Chap. IV—Saint Paul's Faith, a practical principle, 227
Chap. V—The Morality of Saint Paul, 230
Chap. VI—The disinterestedness of St. Paul, 234
Chap. VII—Saint Paul's Prudence in his Conduct toward the Jews, 238
Chap. VIII—Saint Paul's Judgment in his intercourse with the Pagans, 242
Chap. IX—On the general Principle of Saint Paul's Writings, 246
Chap. X—On the Style and Genius of Saint Paul, 252
Chap. XI—Saint Paul's Tenderness of Heart, 257
Chap. XII—Saint Paul's Heavenly Mindedness, 261
Chap. XIII—A general View of the Qualities of St. Paul—his Knowledge of Human Nature—his Delicacy in giving Advice or reproof—his Integrity, 265
Chap. XIV—Saint Paul on the Love of Money, 270

21270

Page.
Chap. XV—On the Genius of Christianity, as seen in St. Paul, 273
Chap. XVI—Saint Paul's respect for constituted Authorities, 277
Chap. XVII—Saint Paul's Attention to inferior Concerns, 281
Chap. XVIII—Saint Paul on the Resurrection 284
Chap. XIX—Saint Paul on Prayer, Thanksgiving, and Religious Joy, 287
Chap. XX—Saint Paul an Example to familiar Life, 291
Chap. XXI—On the superior Advantages of the present period, for the attainment of Knowledge, Religion, and Happiness, 295
Chap. XXII—Conclusion—Cursory inquiry into some of the Causes which impeded general Improvement, 298

CŒLEBS IN SEARCH OF A WIFE, 304

FOREIGN SKETCHES.

Foreign Associations, 437
French Opinions of English Society, 440
English Opinion of French Society, 443
England's Best Hope, 449

DOMESTIC SKETCHES.

On Soundness in Judgment and Consistency in Conduct, 454
Novel Opinions in Religion, 456
Ill effects of the late Secession 461
Exertions of Pious Ladies, 465
High Profession and negligent Practice, 468
Auricular Confession, 471
Unprofitable Reading 471
The Borderers, 473

REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER.

On the Corruption of Human Nature, 477
False Notions of the Dignity of Man, shown from his Helplessness and Dependence, 479
The Obligation of Prayer universal—Regular Seasons to be observed—The Sceptic and the Sensualist reject Prayer, 481
Errors in Prayer, which may hinder its being answered—The Proud Man's Prayer—The patient Christian—False Excuses under the Pretence of Inability, 483
God our Father—Our Unwillingness to please Him—Form of Prayer—Great and Little Sins—all Sin an Offence against God—Benefit of Habitual Prayer, 487
The Doctrine of imputed Sanctification, newly adopted—The old one of progressive Sanctification newly rejected—Both Doctrines injurious to Prayer—St. Paul's Character, 489
Character of those who expect Salvation for their good Works—of those who depend on a careless nominal Faith—Both these Characters unfavourable to Prayer—Christianity a Religion of Love which disposes to Prayer, exhibited in a third Character, 491
Prayer—The condition of its attendant Blessings—Useless Contention about Terms, 493
Vain Excuses for the Neglect of Prayer—The Man of Business—Case of Nehemiah—Prayer against the Fear of Death—Characters to whom Prayer is Recommended, 495
The consolation of Prayer—Its perpetual Obligation, 498
On Intercessory Prayer, 500
The praying Christian in the World—The promise of Rest to the Christian, 502
The Lord's Prayer, a Model both for our Devotion and our Practice—It teaches the Duty of promoting Schemes to advance the Glory of God, 505
Conclusion, 508

SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

Chap. I—The Necessity of Prayer founded on the Corruption of Human Nature, 512
Chap. II—The Duty of Prayer. inferred from the Helplessness of Man, 514
Chap. III—Prayer: its Definition, 515
Chap. IV—The efficacy Prayer, 519
Chap. V—Vain Excuses for the Neglect of Prayer, 522
Chap. VI—Characters who reject Prayer, 525
Chap. VII—Errors in Prayer, 527
Chap. VIII—The Lord's Prayer, 530
Chap. IX—The Lord's Prayer continued, THY WILL BE DONE, 532
Chap. X—Scheme of Prayer proposed for Young Persons, on the Model of the Lord's Prayer, 534
Chap. XI—Perseverance in Prayer and Praise, 537
Chap. XII—Intercessory Prayer, 540
Chap. XIII—Practical Results of Prayer, exhibited in the Life of the Christian in the World, 542
Chap. XIV—The Consolations of Prayer in Affliction, sickness, and Death. 545

HINTS

TOWARDS FORMING THE CHARACTER OF A YOUNG PRINCESS.

I call that a complete and generous education, which fits a person to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously, all the offices both of public and private life, of peace, and of war.—*Milton.*

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF EXETER.

My Lord.—Could it have been foreseen by the author of the following pages, that in the case of the illustrious person who is the subject of them, the standard of education would have been set so high; and especially, that this education would be committed to such able and distinguished hands, the work might surely have been spared. But as the work was gone to the press before that appointment was announced, which must give general satisfaction, it becomes important to request, that if the advice suggested in any part of the work should appear presumptuous, your lordship, and still more the public, who might be more forward than your lordship in charging the author with presumption, will have the candour to recollect, that it was offered not to the learned bishop of Exeter, but to an unknown, and even to an imaginary preceptor.

Under these circumstances, your lordship will perhaps have the goodness to accept the dedication of the following pages; not as arrogantly pointing out duties to the discharge of which you are so competent, but as a mark of the respect and esteem with which I have the honour to be,

My lord, your lordship's most obedient and most faithful servant,

April 2, 1805. THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

If any book, written with an upright and disinterested intention, may be thought to require an apology, it is surely the slight work which is now, with the most respectful deference, submitted, not to the public only, but especially to those who may be more immediately interested in the important object which it has in view.

If we were to inquire what is, even at the present critical period, one of the most momentous concerns which can engage the attention of an Englishman, who feels for his country like a patriot, and for his posterity like a father; what is that object of which the importance is not bounded by the shores of the British islands, nor limited by our colonial possessions;—with which, in its consequences, the interests, not only of all Europe, but of the whole civilized world, may hereafter be in some measure implicated; what Briton would hesitate to reply, the education of the Princess Charlotte of Wales?

After this frank confession of the unspeakable importance of the subject in view, it is no wonder if the extreme difficulty, as well as delicacy of the present undertaking, is acknowledged to be sensibly felt by the author.

It will too probably be thought to imply not only officiousness, but presumption, that a private individual should thus hazard the obtrusion of unsolicited observations on the proper mode of forming the character of an English princess.—It may seem to involve an appearance of unwarrantable distrust, by implying an apprehension of some deficiency in the plan about to be adopted by those, whoever they may be, on whom this great trust may be devolved: and to indicate self-conceit, by conveying an intimation, after so strong an avowal of the delicacy and difficulty of the task, that such a deficiency is within the powers of the author to supply.

The author, however, earnestly desires, as far as it may be possible to obviate these anticipated charges, by alleging that under this free constitution, in which every topic of national policy is openly canvassed, and in which the prerogative of the crown form no mean part of the liberty of the subject, the principles which it is proper to instil into a royal personage, become a topic, which if discussed respectfully, may without offence, exercise, the liberty of the British press.

The writer is very far, indeed, from pretending to offer any thing approaching to a sytem of instruction for the royal pupil, much less from presuming to dictate a plan of conduct to the preceptor. What is here presented, is a mere outline, which may be filled up by far more able hands: a sketch which contains no consecutive details, which neither aspires to regularity of design, nor exactness of execution.

To awaken a lively attention to a subject of such moment, to point out some circumstances connected with the early season of improvement, but still more with the subsequent stages of life; to offer, not a treatise on education, but a desultory suggestion of sentiments and principles; to convey instruction, not so much by precept or by argument, as to exemplify it by illustrations and examples; and, above all, to stimulate the wise and the good to exertions far more effectual; these are the real motives which have given birth to this slender performance.

Had the royal pupil been a prince, these hints would never have been obtruded on the world, as it would then have been naturally assumed, that the established plan usually adopted in such cases would have been pursued. Nor does the author presume in the present instance, to insinuate a suspicion, that there will be any want of a large and liberal scope in the projected system, or to intimate an apprehension that the course of study will be adapted to the sex, rather than to the circumstances of the princess.

If, however, it should be asked, why a stranger presumes to interfere in a matter of such high concern? It may be answered in the words of an elegant critic, that in classic story, when a superb and lasting monument was about to be consecrated to beauty, every lover was permitted to carry a tribute.

The appearance of a valuable elementary work on the principles of Christianity, which has been recently published in our language, translated from the German under the immediate patronage of an august personage, for the avowed purpose of benefit to her illustrious daughters, as it is an event highly auspicious to the general interests of religion, so is it a circumstance very encouraging to the present undertaking.

It is impossible to write on such points as are discussed in this little work without being led to draw a comparison between the lot of a British subject, and that of one who treats on similar topics under a despotic government.—The excellent archbishop of Cambray, with every advantage which genius, learning, and profession, and situation could confer; the admired preceptor of the duke of Burgundy, appointed to the office by the king himself, was yet in the beautiful work which he composed for the use of his royal pupil, driven to the necessity of couching his instructions under a fictitious narrative, and of sheltering behind the veil of fable, the duties of a just sovereign, and the blessings of a good government: he was aware, that even under this disguise, his delineation of both would too probably be construed into a satire on the personal errors of his own king, and the vices of the French government, and in spite of his ingenious discretion, the event justified his apprehensions.

Fortunate are the subjects of that free and happy country who are not driven to have recourse to any such expedients; who may, without danger, dare to express temperately what they think lawfully; who, in describing the most perfect form of government, instead of recurring to poetic invention, need only delineate that under which they themselves live; who, in sketching the character, and shadowing out the duties of a patriot king, have no occasion to turn their eyes from their own country to the throne of Ithaca or Salentum.

HINTS

TOWARDS FORMING THE CHARACTER OF A YOUNG PRINCESS.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

We are told that when a sovereign of ancient times, who wished to be a mathematician, but was deterred by the difficulty of attainment, asked, whether he could not be instructed in some easier method, the answer which he received was, that there was no royal road to geometry. The lesson contained in this reply ought never to be lost sight of, in that most important and delicate of all undertakings, the education of a prince!

It is a truth which might appear too obvious to require enforcing, and yet of all others it is a truth most liable to be practically forgotten, that the same subjugation of desire and will, of inclinations and tastes, to the laws of reason and conscience, which every one wishes to see promoted in the lowest ranks of society, is still more necessary in the very highest, in order to the attainment either of individual happiness, or of general virtue, to public usefulness, or to private self-enjoyment.

Where a prince, therefore, is to be educated, his own welfare no less than that of his people, humanity no less than policy, prescribe, that the claims and privileges of the rational being should not be suffered to merge in the peculiar rights or exemptions of the expectant sovereign. If, in such cases, the wants and weaknesses of human nature could indeed be wholly effaced, as easily as they are kept out of sight, there would at least be some reasonable plea against the charge of cruelty. But when, on the contrary, the most elevated monarch must still retain every natural hope and fear, every affection and passion of the heart, every frailty of the mind, and every weakness of the body, to which the meanest subject is liable; how exquisitely inhuman must it be to provide so sedulously for the extrinsic accident of transient greatness, as to blight the growth of substantial virtue, to dry up the fountains of mental and moral comfort, and in short to commit the ill-fated victim of such mismanagement to more, almost, than human dangers and difficulties, without even the common resources of the least favoured of mankind.

Yet, must not this be the unaggravated consequence of not accustoming the royal child to that salutary control which the corruption of our nature requires, as its indispensable and earliest corrective? If those foolish desires, which in the great mass of mankind are providentially repressed by the want of means to gratify them, should, in the case of royalty, be thought warrantable, because every possible gratification is within reach, what would be the result, but the full blown luxuriance of folly, vice, and misery? The laws of human nature

will not bend to human greatness; and by these immutable laws it is determined, that happiness and virtue, virtue and self-command, self-command and early habitual self-denial, should be joined together in an indissoluble bond of connexion.

The first habit, therefore, to be formed in every human being, and still more in the offspring and heir of royalty, is that of patience, and even cheerfulness, under postponed and restricted gratification. And the first lesson to be taught is, that since self-command is so essential to all genuine virtue and real happiness, where others cannot restrain us, there, especially, we should restrain ourselves. That illustrious monarch, Gustavus Adolphus, was so deeply sensible of this truth, that when he was surprised by one of his officers in secret prayer in his tent, he said, 'Persons of my rank are answerable to God alone for their actions; this gives the enemy of mankind a peculiar advantage over us; an advantage which can only be resisted by prayer, and reading the Scriptures.'

As the mind opens, the universal truth of this principle may be exemplified in innumerable instances, by which it may be demonstrated, that man is a rational being only so far as he can thus command himself. That such a superiority to the passions is essential to all regular and steady performance of duty; and that true gratification is thus, and thus only insured, because, by him who thus habitually restrains himself, not only every lawful pleasure is most perfectly enjoyed; but every common blessing, for which the sated voluptuary has lost all relish, becomes a source of the most genuine pleasure, a source of pleasure which is never exhausted, because such common blessings are never wholly withheld.

The mind should be formed early, no less than the person: and for the same reason. Providence has plainly indicated childhood to be the season of instruction, by communicating at that period, such flexibility to the organs, such retention to the memory, such quickness to the apprehension, such inquisitiveness to the temper, such alacrity to the animal spirits, and such impressibility to the affections, as are not possessed at any subsequent period. We are therefore bound by every tie of duty to follow these obvious designations of Providence, by moulding that flexibility to the most durable ends; by storing that memory with the richest knowledge; by pointing that apprehension to the highest objects; by giving to that alacrity its best direction; by turning that inquisitiveness to the noblest intellectual purposes; and, above all, by converting that impressibility of heart to the most exalted moral use.

If this be true in general, much more forcibly does it apply to the education of princes! Nothing short of the soundest, most rational, and, let me add, most religious education, can counteract the dangers to which they are exposed. If the highest of our nobility, in default of some better way of guarding against the mischiefs of flatterers and dependents, deem it expedient to commit their sons to the wholesome equality of a public school, in order to repress their aspiring notions, and check the tendencies of their birth; —If they find it necessary to counteract the pernicious influence of domestic luxury, and the corrupting softness of domestic indulgence, by severity of study and closeness of application; how much more indispensable is the spirit of this principle in the instance before us? The highest nobility have their equals, their competitors, and even their superiors. Those who are born within the sphere of royalty are destitute of all such extrinsic means of correction, and must be wholly indebted for their safety to the soundness of their principles, and the rectitude of their habits. Unless, therefore, the brightest light of reason be, from the very first, thrown upon their path, and the divine energies of our holy religion, both restraining and attractive, be brought as early as possible to act upon their feelings, the children of royalty, by the very fate of their birth, would be 'of all men most miserable.'

Let it not, however, be supposed, that any impracticable rigour is here recommended; or that it is conceived to be necessary that the gay period of childhood should be rendered gloomy or painful, whether in the cottage or the palace. The virtue which is aimed at, is not that of the stoic philosophy; nor do the habits which are deemed valuable, require the harshness of a Spartan education. Let nature, truth, and reason, be consulted; and, let the child, and especially the royal child, be as much as possible, trained according to their simple and consistent indications. The attention, in such instances as the present, should be the more watchful and unremitting, as counteracting influences are, in so exalted a station, necessarily multiplied; and every difficulty is at its greatest possible height. In a word, let not common sense, which is universal and eternal, be sacrificed to the capricious tastes of the child, or to the pliant principles of any who may approach her. But let the virtue and the happiness of the royal pupil be as simply, as feelingly, and as uniformly consulted, as if she were the daughter of a private gentleman. May this attention to her moral and mental cultivation be the supreme concern, from honest reverence to the offspring of such a race, from a dutiful regard to her own future happiness, and from reasonable attention to the well-being of those millions, whose earthly fate may be at this moment suspended on lessons, and habits, received by one providentially distinguished female!

CHAP. II.

On the Acquisition of Knowledge.

The course of instruction for the princess will, doubtless, be wisely adapted, not only to the duties, but to the dangers of her rank. The probability of her having one day functions to discharge, which, in such exempt cases only, fall to the lot of females, obviously suggests the expediency of an education not only superior to, but in certain respects, distinct from, that of other women. What was formerly deemed necessary in an instance of this nature, may be inferred from the well-known attainments of the

unfortunate lady Jane Grey; and still more from the no less splendid acquirements of queen Elizabeth. Of the erudition of the latter, we have particular account from one, who was the fittest in that age to appreciate it, the celebrated Roger Aschasm. He tells us, that when he read over with her the orations of Eschines and Demosthenes in Greek, she not only understood, at first sight, the full force and propriety of the language, and the meaning of the orators, but that she comprehended the whole scheme of the laws, customs, and manners of the Athenians. She possessed an exact and accurate knowledge of the Scriptures, and had committed to memory most of the striking passages in them. She had also learned by heart many of the finest parts of Thucydides and Xenophon, especially those which relate to life and manners. Thus were her early years sedulously employed in laying in a large stock of materials for governing well. To what purpose she improved them, let her illustrious reign of forty-five years declare!

If the influence of her erudition on her subsequent prosperity should be questioned; let it be considered, that her intellectual attainments supported the dignity of her character, under foibles and feminine weaknesses, which would otherwise have sunk her credit: she had even address enough to contrive to give to those weaknesses a certain classic grace. Let it be considered also, that whatever tended to raise her mind to a level with those whose services she was to use, and of whose counsels she was to avail herself, proportionably contributed to that mutual respect and confidence between the queen and her ministers, without which, the results of her government could not have been equally successful. Almost every man of rank was then a man of letters, and literature was valued accordingly. Had, therefore, deficiency of learning been added to inferiority of sex, we might not at this day have the reign of Elizabeth on which to look back, as the period in which administrative energy seemed to attain the greatest possible perfection.

Yet, though an extended acquaintance with ancient authors will be necessary now, as it was then, in the education of a princess, a general knowledge of ancient languages, it is presumed, may be dispensed with. The Greek authors, at least, may doubtless be read with sufficient advantage through the medium of a translation; the spirit of the original being, perhaps, more transfusible into the English, than into any other modern tongue. But are there not many forcible reasons why the Latin language should not be equally omitted?* Besides the advantage of reading, in their original dress, the historians of that empire, the literature of Rome is peculiarly interesting, as being the most satisfactory medium through which the moderns can obtain an intimate knowledge of the ancient world. As the Latin itself is a modification of one of the Greek dialects, so the Roman philosophers and poets, having formed themselves, as much as possible, on Grecian models, present to us the nearest possible transcripts of those masters whom they copy. Thus, by an acquaintance with the Latin language, we are brought into a kind of actual contact not only with the ancient world, but with that portion of it which, having the most direct and the fullest intercourse with the other parts, introduces us, in a manner the most informing and satisfactory to classical and philosophical antiquity in general. But what is still more, the Latin tongue enables us for ourselves, without the intermediation of any interpreter, to examine all the particular circumstances in manners, intercourse, modes of thinking and speaking, of that period which Eternal Wisdom chose (probably because it was ever after to appear the most luminous in the whole retrospect of history) as fittest for the advent of the Messiah, and the bringing life and immortality to light by the gospel.

If to this may be added lesser yet not unimportant considerations, we would say, that by the acquaintance which the Latin language would give her with the etymology of words, she will learn to be more accurate in her definitions, as well as more critically exact and elegant in the use of her own language; and her ability to manage it with gracefulness and vigour will be considerably increased.*

Of the modern languages, if the author dares hazard an opinion, the French and German seem the most necessary. The Italian appears less important, as those authors which seem more peculiarly to belong to her education, such as Davilla, Guicciardin, and Beccaria, may be read either in French or English translations.

It is not to be supposed that a personage, under her peculiar circumstances, should have much time to spare for the acquisition of what are called the fine arts; nor, perhaps, is it to be desired. To acquire them in perfection, would steal away too large a portion of those precious hours which will barely suffice to lay in the various rudiments of indispensable knowledge; and, in this fastidious age, whatever falls far short of perfection, is deemed of little worth. A moderate skill in music, for instance, would probably have little other effect, than to make the listeners feel, as Farinelli is said to have done, who used to complain heavily that the pension of 2000*l.* a year, which he had from the king of Spain, was compensation little enough for his being sometimes obliged to hear his majesty play. Yet this would be a far less evil than that to which *excellence* might lead. We can think of few things more to be deprecated, than that those who have the greatest concerns to pursue, should have their tastes engaged, perhaps monopolized, by trifles. A listener to the royal music, if possessed of either wisdom or virtue, could not but feel his pleasure at the most exquisite performance abated, by the apprehension that this perfection implied the neglect of matters far more essential.

* The royal father of the illustrious pupil is said to possess the princely accomplishment of a pure classical taste. Of his love for polite learning, the attention which he is paying to the recovery of certain of the lost works of some of the Roman authors is an evidence.

* Who does not consider as one of the most interesting passages of modern history, that which relates the effect produced by an eloquent Latin oration pronounced in a full assembly, by the late empress Maria Theresa, in the bloom of her youth and beauty, so late as the year 1740? Antiquity produces nothing more touching of the kind.

Besides, to excel in those arts, which, though merely ornamental, are yet well enough adapted to ladies who have only a subordinate part to fill in life, would rather lessen than augment the dignity of a sovereign. It was a truly royal reply of Themistocles, when he was asked if he could play on the lute—'No, but if you will give me a paltry village I may perhaps know how to improve it into a great city.'

These are imperial arts, and worthy kings.

As to these inferior accomplishments, it is not desirable, and is it not sufficient that a sovereign should possess that general knowledge and taste which give the power of discriminating excellence, so as judiciously to cherish, and liberally to reward it?

But, not only in works of mere taste; even in natural history, botany, experimental philosophy, and other generally valuable sciences, a correct but unlaboured outline of knowledge, it is presumed, will, in the present instance, be thought sufficient. Profitable and delightful as these pursuits are to others (and no one more admires them than the writer of this essay) yet the royal personage must not be examining plants, when she should be studying laws; nor investigating the instincts of animals, when she should be analyzing the characters of men. The time so properly devoted to these studies in other educations, will be little enough in this, to attain that knowledge of general history, and especially that accurate acquaintance with the events of our own country, which, in her situation, are absolutely indispensable.

Geography and chronology have not unfitly been termed the two eyes of history. With chronology she should be completely acquainted. It is little to know events, if we do not know in what order and succession they are disposed. It is necessary also to learn how the periods of computation are determined. Method does not merely aid the memory, it also assists the judgment, by settling the dependence of one event upon another. Chronology is the grand art of historical arrangement. To know that a man of distinguished eminence has lived, is to know little, unless we know when he lived, and who were his contemporaries. Indistinctness and confusion must always perplex that understanding, in which the annals of past ages are not thus consecutively linked together.

Would it not be proper always to read history with a map, in order to keep up in the mind the indissoluble connexion between history and geography; and that a glance of the country may recall the exploits of the hero, or the virtues of the patriot who has immortalized it?

Respecting the study of geography, I would observe that many particulars, which do not seem to have been considered by the generality of writers, ought to be brought before the view of a royal pupil. The effects of local situation, and geographical boundary, on the formation and progress of nations and empires.—The consequences, for example, which have resulted as well in the political, as in the civil and religious circumstances of mankind, from the Mediterranean being so aptly interposed, not so much as it should seem to be a common barrier, as to form a most convenient and important medium of intercourse between Europe, Asia, and Africa.—The effect of this great *Naumachia* of the ancient world, in transferring empire from east to west;—the want of tides in the Mediterranean, so as to adapt this scene of early maritime adventure to the rudeness of those who were first to navigate it, and whose success might have been fatally impeded, by that diversity of currents, which in other seas the ebb and flow of the tides is perpetually creating.

In connection with this, though somewhat locally remote from it, is to be remarked the regularity of the monsoons in the Erythræan* sea, by means of which, the earlier traders between Africa and India were carried across the Persian gulf, without the exercise of that skill, which as yet did not exist. And, as if to facilitate the conveyance of those most interesting commodities to the Mediterranean, in order that the commerce of that inland ocean might never want an adequate stimulus, the Red Sea is carried onward, till it is separated from the Mediteranean by a comparatively narrow isthmus: an isthmus that seems providentially to have been retained, that while the maratime activity and general convenience of the ancient world was provided for, there might still be sufficient difficulty in the way, to excite to a more extended circumnavigation, when the invention of the compass, the improvement of maritime skill, and the general progress of human society, should concur in bringing on the proper season.

And, in this geographic sketch, let not the remarkable position of Judea be forgotten:† placed in the very middle parts of the old world (whose extent may be reckoned from the pillars of Hercules to 'the utmost Indian isle Tabrobane,') as the sun in the centre of the solar system, and at the top of the Mediterranean, both that it might be within the vortex of great events, and also that when the fulness of time should come, it might be most conveniently situated for pouring forth that light of truth, of which it was destined to be the local origin, upon all the nations of the earth, and especially on the Roman empire. Such are the less common particulars to which attention may advantageously be drawn. With geography in general should of course be

* A name given formerly to all that portion of the sea which lies between Arabia and India, though latterly confined to the Arabian gulf.

† It is worthy of notice, that in all probability Judea was the country by means of which a trade was first opened between the Mediterranean and India. David had taken from the Edomites two cities at the Red Sea, Ezion-Geber and Elath; these, we are told, Solomon made sea-ports, and colonized them with navigators, furnished by the king of Tyre, of whom it is said, 2 Chron. viii. 18, that he sent unto Solomon ships and servants, who had knowledge of the sea, and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir; and, 1 Kings, x. 22, we are told that Solomon had at sea a navy of Tarshish with the navy of Hiram, which came once in three years, bringing gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. Thus, Tyre, the great emporium of the Mediterranean was evidently indebted to David and Solomon, for access to that commerce of the east, which was carried on by means of the Red Sea, and brought from the above-mentioned ports, across the isthmus of Suez, probably to the same place where the Tyrians in later times unshipped their Asiatic commodities, the port of Rhinocorura.

connected some knowledge of the natural and civil history of each country; its chief political revolutions, its alliances, and dependencies; together with the state of its arts, commerce, natural productions, government, and religion.

—

CHAP. III

On the importance of forming the mind.

It is of the highest importance that the royal pupil should acquire an early habit of method and regularity in her studies. She should, therefore, be particularly guarded against that desultory manner of reading, too common at this day, and particularly with women. She should be trained always to study some valuable purpose, and carefully to attend to the several waymarks, by means of which that end may most effectually be attained. She should be accustomed to call forth the forces of her mind, and to keep them alert, well disciplined, and ready for service. She should so cultivate settled principles of action, as to acquire the habit of applying them, on demand, to the actual occasions of life; and should possess a promptitude, as well as soundness, in deducing consequences, and drawing conclusions. Her mind should be exercised with as much industry in the pursuit of moral truth and useful knowledge, as that of a young academic in the studies of his profession. The art of reigning is the profession of a prince. And, doubtless, it is a science which requires at least as much preparatory study as any other. Besides, one part of knowledge is often so necessary for reflecting light on another part, that perhaps no one who does not understand many things, can understand any thing well.

But, whatever may be the necessary degree of knowledge, it is most certain that it cannot be attained amidst the petty avocations which occupy a modern lady's time.—Knowledge will not come by nature or by chance. Precepts do not always convey it. Talents do not always insure it. It is the fruit of pains. It is the reward of application.

Dii *laboribus* omnia vendunt.

Let her ever bear in mind, she *is not to study that she may become learned, but that she may become wise.* It is by such an acquisition of knowledge as is here recommended, that her mind must be so enlarged and invigorated as to prepare her for following wise counsels, without blindly yielding to fortuitous suggestions; as to enable her to trace actions into their multifarious consequences, and to discover real analogies without being deceived by superficial appearances of resemblance. It is thus that she must be secured from the dominion of the less enlightened. This will preserve her from credulity; prevent her from overrating inferior talents, and help her to attain that *nil admirari*, which is so necessary for distinguishing arrogant pretension from substantial merit. It will aid her to appreciate the value of those around her; will assist her penetration in what regards her friends; preserve her from a blind prejudice in choosing them, from retaining them through fear or fondness, and from changing them through weakness or caprice. 'When we are abused through specious appearances,' says the judicious Hooker, 'it is because reason is negligent to search out the fallacy.' But he might have added, if reason be not cultivated early, if it be not exercised constantly, it will have no eye for discernment, no heart for vigorous exertion. Specious appearances will perpetually deceive that mind which has been accustomed to acquiesce in them through ignorance, blindness, and inaction.

A prince should be ignorant of nothing which it is honourable to know; but he should look on mere acquisition of knowledge not as the end to be rested in, but only as the means of arriving at some higher end. He may have been well instructed in history, belles lettres, philosophy, and languages, and yet have received a defective education, if the formation of his judgment has been neglected. For, it is not so important to know every thing, as to know the exact value of every thing, to appreciate what we learn, and to arrange what we know.

Books alone will never form the character. Mere reading would rather tend to make a pedantic, than an accomplished prince. It is *conversation* which must unfold, enlarge, and apply the use of books. Without that familiar comment on what is read, which will make a most important part of the intercourse between a royal pupil and the society around him, mere reading might only fill the mind with fallacious models of character, and false maxims of life. It is *conversation* which must develope what is obscure, raise what is low, correct what is defective, qualify what is exaggerated, and gently and almost insensibly raise the understanding, form the heart, and fix the taste; and by giving just proportions to the mind, teach it the power of fair appreciation, draw it to adopt what is reasonable, to love what is good, to taste what is pure, and to imitate what is elegant.

But this is not to be effected by cold rules, and formal reflections; by insipid dogmas, and tedious sermonizing. It should be done so indirectly, so discreetly, and so pleasantly, that the pupil shall not be led to dread a lecture at every turn, nor a dissertation on every occurrence. While yet such an ingenious and cheerful turn may be given to subjects apparently unpromising, old truths may be conveyed by such new images, that the pupil will wonder to find herself improved when she thought she was only diverted. Folly may be made contemptible, affectation ridiculous, vice hateful, and virtue beautiful, by such seemingly unpremeditated means, as shall have the effect, without having the effort, of a lesson. Topics must not be so much proposed as insinuated.

But above all, there should be a constant, but imperceptible habit of turning the mind to a love of TRUTH in all its forms and aspects; not only in matters of grave morality, but in matters of business, of common intercourse, and even of taste; for there is a truth both in moral and mental taste, little short of the exactness of mathematical truth; and the mind should acquire

an habit of seeking perfection in every thing. This habit should be so early and insensibly formed, that when the pupil comes afterwards to meet with maxims, and instances of truth and virtue, in historical and moral writings, she may bring to the perusal tastes, tempers, and dispositions so laid in, as to have prepared the mind for their reception. As this mode of preparatory and incidental instruction will be gradual and inwoven, so it will be deep and durable; but as it will be little obvious to ordinary judges, it will excite less wonder and admiration than the usual display and exhibition so prevalent in modern education. Its effects will be less ostensible, but they will be more certain.

When it is considered how short is that period of life in which plain unvarnished truth will be likely to appear in all its naked simplicity before princes, is there a moment of that happy, that auspicious season to be lost, for presenting it to them in all its lovely and engaging forms? It is not enough that they should possess truth as a principle; they should cherish it as an object of affection, delight in it as a matter of taste, and dread nothing so much as false colouring and artifice.

He who possesses a sound principle, and strong relish of truth in his own mind, will possess a touchstone by which to try this quality in others, and which will enable him to detect false notions, to see through false manners, and to despise false attractions. This discerning faculty is the more important, as the high breeding of every polished society presents so plausible an imitation of goodness, as to impose on the superficial observer, who, satisfied with the image and superscription, never inquires whether the coin be counterfeit or sterling.

The early habit of sifting questions, turning about a truth, and examining an argument on all sides, will strengthen the intellectual powers of the royal pupil; prevent her thoughts from wandering; accustom her to weigh fairly and resolve soundly; will conquer irresolution in her mind; preserve her from being easily deceived by false reasoning, startled by doubts, and confounded by objections. She will learn to digest her thoughts in an exact method, to acquire a logical order in the arrangement of them, to possess precision in her ideas, and its natural concomitant, perspicuity in her expression; all which will be of the highest importance to one who may hereafter have so much to do and to say in public.

With the *shades* of expressions she should also be well acquainted, and be habituated to use the most apposite and the most correct; such are neither too high nor too low, too strong nor too weak, for the occasion, such as are obvious, but not vulgar, accurate but not pedantic, elegant but not artificial.

The memory should be stored with none but the best things, that when, hereafter, the judgment is brought into exercise, it may find none but the best materials to act upon. Instead, therefore, of loading the memory, might it not be useful to establish it into a rule to read to her every day, as an amusement, and distinctly from all regular instruction, a passage from the history of England, a story out of Plutarch, or any similar author; and require of her to repeat it afterwards, in her own words? This would not only add, daily, one important fact to her stock of knowledge, but would tend to form a perspicuous and elegant style.—Occasion would also be furnished for observing whether she exhibited that best proof of good sense, the seizing on the prominent features of the story, laying less stress on what was less important.

But while accuracy is thus sought the still more important habit of comprehensiveness must not be overlooked. Her mind should be trained to embrace a wide compass; it should be taught to take in a large whole, and then subdivide it into parts; each of which should be considered distinctly, yet connectedly, with strict attention to its due proportions, relative situations, its bearings with respect to the others, and the dependence of each part on the whole. Where, however, so many things are to be known, and so many to be done, it is impossible to attend equally to all. It is therefore important, that, in any case of competition, the less material be left unlearned and undone; and that petty details never fill the time and mind, at the expense of neglecting great objects.

For those, therefore, who have much business and little time, it is a great and necessary art to learn to extract the essential spirit of an author from the body of his work, to know how to seize on the vital parts; to discern where his strength lies; and to separate it from those portions of the work which are superfluous, collateral, or merely ornamental.

On the subject of economizing time, the writer would have been fearful of incurring the charge of needless strictness, by suggesting the utility of accustoming princes to be read to while they are dressing, could not the actual practice of our admirable queen Mary be adduced to sanction the advice.—That excellent princess, from a conscientious regard to the value of time, was either read to by others, or condescended, herself, to read aloud, that those who were employed about her person might share the benefit, which she enhanced by such pleasant and judicious remarks as the subject suggested. But there is an additional reason why the *children* of the great would be benefited by this habit; for it would not only turn idle moments to some account, but would be of use in another way, by cutting off the fairest occasions which their inferior attendants can have for engaging them, by frivolous or flattering discourse.

It would be well to watch attentively the bent of the mind in the hours of relaxation and amusement, when caution is dismissed by the pupil, and control by the preceptor; when no studies are imposed, and no specific employment suggested. In fact when vigilance appears to sleep, it should be particularly on the alert, in order to discern those tendencies and dispositions which will then most naturally unfold themselves; and because that the heart, being at those seasons less under discipline, will be more likely to betray its native character. And as the regulation of the temper is

that part of education on which the whole happiness of life most materially depends, no occasion should be neglected, no indication slighted, no counteraction omitted, which may contribute to accomplish so important an end.

The peculiar defects, not merely such faults as are incident to childhood, but the predominating faults of the individual, should be carefully watched, lest they acquire strength through neglect, when they might have been diminished by a counteracting force. If the temper be restless, ardent, and impetuous, weariness and discontent will, hereafter, fill up the dreary intervals between one animating scene and another, unless the temper be subdued and tranquillized by a constant habit of quiet, though varied, and interesting occupation. Few things are more fatal to the mind, than to depend for happiness on the contingent recurrence of events, business, and diversions, which inflame and agitate it; for as they do not often occur, the intervals which are long are also languid; the enjoyment is factitious happiness; the privation is actual misery.

Reading, therefore, has, especially to a prince, its moral uses, independently of the nature of the study itself. It brings no small gain, if it secure him from the dominion of turbulent pursuits and agitating pleasures. If it snatch him on the one hand, from public schemes of ambition and false glory; and if it rescue him on the other, from the habit of forming petty projects of incessant diversion, the rudiments of a trifling and useless life.

Knowledge, therefore, is often the preservative of virtue, and, next to right habits of sentiment and conduct, the best human source of happiness. Could Louis the fourteenth have *read*, probably the edict of Nantz had not been revoked. But a restless temper, and a vacant mind, unhappily lighting on absolute power, present, in this monarch, a striking instance of the fatal effects of ignorance and the calamity of a neglected education. He had a good natural understanding, loved business, and seemed to have a mind capable of comprehending it. Many of his recorded expressions are neat and elegant. But he was uninstructed upon system; cardinal Mazarine, with a view to secure his own dominion, having withheld from him all the necessary means of education. Thus, he had received no ideas from books; he even hated in others the learning which he did not himself possess: the terms *wit* and *scholar*, were in his mind, terms of reproach; the one as implying satire, the other pedantry. He wanted not application to public affairs; and habit had given him some experience in them. But the apathy which marked his latter years strongly illustrated the infelicity of an unfurnished mind. This, in the tumult of his brighter days, amidst the succession of intrigues, the splendour of festivity, and the bustle of arms, was scarcely felt. But ambition and voluptuousness cannot always be gratified. Those ardent passions, which in youth were devoted to licentiousness, in the meridian of life to war, in a more advanced age to bigotry and intolerance, not only had never been directed by religion, but had never been softened by letters.—After he had renounced his mistresses at home, and his unjust wars abroad, even though his mind seems to have acquired some pious tendencies, his life became a scene of such inanity and restlessness, that he was impatient at being, for a moment, left alone. He had no intellectual resources. The agitation of great events had subsided. From never having learned either to employ himself in reading or thinking, his life became a blank, from which he could not be relieved by the sight of his palaces, his gardens, and his aqueducts, the purchase of depopulated villages and plundered cities.

Indigent amid all his possessions, he exhibited a striking confirmation of the declaration of Solomon, concerning the unsatisfying nature of all earthly pleasures; and showed, that it is in vain even for kings to hope to obtain from others those comforts, and that contentment, which man can derive only from within himself.

CHAP. IV.

The Education of a Sovereign a specific Education.

The formation of the character is the grand object to be accomplished. This should be considered to be not so much a separate business, as a sort of centre to which all the rays of instruction should be directed. All the studies it is presumed, of the royal pupil should have some reference to her probable future situation. Is it not, therefore, obviously requisite that her understanding be exercised in a wider range than that of others of her sex; and that her principles be so established, on the best and surest foundation, as to fit her at once for fulfilling the peculiar demands, and for resisting the peculiar temptations of her station? Princes have been too often inclined to fancy, that they have few interests in common with the rest of mankind, feeling themselves placed by Providence on an eminence so much above them. But the great aim should be, to correct the haughtiness which may attend this superiority, without relinquishing the truth of the fact. Is it not, therefore, the business of those who have the care of a royal education, not so much to deny the reality of this distance, or to diminish its amount, as to account for its existence, and point out the uses to which it is subservient?

A prince is an individual being, whom the hand of Providence has placed on a pedestal of peculiar elevation: but he should learn, that he is placed there as the minister of good to others; that the dignity being hereditary, he is the more manifestly raised to that elevation, not by his own merit, but by providential destination; by those laws, which he is himself bound to observe with the same religious fidelity as the meanest of his subjects. It ought early to be impressed that those appendages of royalty, with which human weakness may too probably be fascinated, are intended not to gratify the feelings, but to distinguish the person of the monarch; that, in themselves, they are of little value; that they

are beneath the attachment of a rational, and of no substantial use to a moral being; in short, that they are not a subject of a triumph, but are to be acquiesced in for the public benefit, and from regard to that weakness of our nature, which subjects so large a portion of every community to the influence of their imagination, and their senses.

While, therefore, a prince is taught the use of those exterior embellishments, which, as was before observed, designate, rather than dignify his station; while he is led to place the just value on every appendage which may contribute to give him importance in the eyes of the multitude; who not being just judges of what constitutes true dignity, are consequently apt to reverence the royal person exactly so far as they see outward splendour connected with it; should not a royal pupil himself be taught, instead of overvaluing that splendour, to think it a humbling, rather than an elevating consideration, that so large a part of the respect paid to him, should be owing to such extrinsic causes, to causes which make no part of himself? Let him then be taught to gratify the public with all the pomp and circumstance suitable to royalty; but let him never forget, that though his station ought always to procure for him respect, he must ever look to his own personal conduct, for inspiring veneration, attachment, and affection; and ever let it be remembered that this affection is the strongest tie of obedience; that subjects like to see their prince great, when that greatness is not produced by rendering them less; and as the profound Selden observes, 'the people will always be liberal to a prince who spares them, and a good prince will always spare a liberal people.'

This is not a period when any wise man would wish to diminish either the authority, or the splendour of kings. So far from it, he will support with his whole weight, an institution which the licentious fury of a revolutionary spirit has rendered more dear to every Englishman. On no consideration, therefore would he pluck even a feather from those decorations of royalty, which, by a long association, have become intimately connected with its substance. In short, every wise inhabitant of the British isles must feel, that he who would despoil the crown of its jewels, would not be far from spoiling the wearer of his crown. And as nothing but domestic folly or frenzy would degrade the monarch from his due elevation, so democratic envy alone would wish to strip him, not only of a single constituent of real greatness, but even of a single ornamental appendage on which the people have been accustomed to gaze with honest joy.

Nevertheless, those outrages which have lately been committed against the sanctity of the throne, furnish new and most powerful reasons for assiduously guarding princes by every respectful admonition, against any tendency to exceed their just prerogatives, and for checking every rising propensity to overstep, in the slightest degree, their well-defined rights.

At the same time it should be remembered, that there may be no less dangerous faults on the other side, and that want of firmness in maintaining just rights, or of spirit in the prompt and vigorous exercise of necessary authority, may prove as injurious to the interests of a community as the most lawless stretch of power. Defects of this very kind were evidently among the causes, of bringing down, on the gentlest of the kings of France, more calamities than had ever resulted from the most arbitrary exertion of power in any of his predecessors. Feebleness and irresolution, which seems to be little more than pardonable weaknesses in private persons, may, by their consequences, prove in princes fatal errors; and even produce the effect of great crimes. Vigour to secure, and opportunity to exert their constitutional power, is as essential as moderation not to exceed it.*

It serves to show the inestimable value of well-defined laws, and the importance of making the prince acquainted with them, that Louis the thirteenth conceived a jealousy respecting his own power, because he did not understand the nature of it; and his favourites were unable or unwilling to instruct him. But his usurpation of extraordinary power tended to exalt his minister still more than himself; and in setting the king above the laws, he still set the cardinal above the king.

The power of the monarchs of France had never been defined by any written law. Charles V. Louis IX. and perhaps a very few other wise and temperate princes, did not conceive their power to be above the laws, but approved of those moderating maxims which had become, by degrees, the received usages of the state, and which, while they seemed, in some measure, a constitutional check upon the absolute power of the crown, formed also a guard against that popular licentiousness, which, in a pure despotism, appears to be the only resource left to the people. But France has had few monarchs like Charles V. and still fewer like Louis IX. Henry IV. seems to have found and observed the happy medium. He was at once resolute and mild; determined and affectionate; politic and humane. The firmness of his mind, and the active vigour of his conduct, always kept pace with the gentleness of his language. He fought for his prerogatives bravely, and defended them vigorously; yet, it is said, he ever carefully avoided the use of the term. He also loved and sought popularity, but he never sacrificed to it any just claim, nor ever made a concession which did not also tend to guard the real prerogatives of the crown.† And it seems to be the true wisdom of a prince, that, as he cannot be too deliberate in his councils, nor too cautious in his plans, so when those counsels are well matured, and those plans well

* May it not be observed, without risking the imputation of flattery, that perhaps never, in the history of the world, has any country been so uninterruptedly blessed with that very temperament of government, which is here implied, as this empire has been under the dominion of the house of Hanover? There has, on no occasion been a want of firmness; but with that firmness, there has been a conscientious regard to the principles of the constitution. Who can at this moment pretend to pronounce how much we owe to the steady integrity which is so obviously possessed by our present sovereign? And who does not remember with what good effect his resolute composure and dignified firmness were exerted during a scene of the greatest alarm which has occurred in his reign—the riots of the year 1780.

† Il ne se defioit pas des loix, parcequ'il se fioit en lui meme.—*De Retz.*

digested he cannot be too decisive in their execution.

It was not, indeed, under the actual rule of monarchs, however arbitrary, that royal authority was raised to its highest pitch in France. It was Richelieu, who, under a regency, rapidly established such a system of tyranny, as the boldest sovereign had seldom dared to attempt. He improved on all the anterior corruptions; and, as a lively French author says, tried to conceal their being corruptions, by erecting them into political maxims. Mazarin, with inferior ability, which would not have enabled him to *give* the impulse, attempted still more to accelerate the movement of that machine which his predecessor had set a going with such velocity; and a civil war was the consequence.

Happily, the examples of neither the kings, the laws, nor the constitution of France, can be strictly applicable to us. Happily also, we live at a time, when genuine freedom is so completely established among us: when the constitution, powers, and privileges of parliament are so firmly settled; the limits of the royal prerogative so exactly defined, and so fully understood; and the mild, moderate, and equitable spirit of the illustrious family in which it is invested, is withall so conspicuous, that as Blackstone observes, 'topics of government, which, like the mysteries of the Bona Dea, were formerly thought too sacred to be divulged to any but the initiated, may now, without the smallest offence, be fully and temperately discussed.'

At this tumultuous period, when we have seen almost all the thrones of Christendom trembling to their foundation; we have witnessed the British constitution, like the British oak, confirmed and rooted by the shaking of that tremendous blast, which has stripped kingdoms of their crowns, levelled the fences and inclosures of law, laid waste the best earthly blessings of mankind, and involved in desolation a large part of the civilized world. When we have beheld absolute monarchies, and republican states, alike ravaged by the tempest, shall we not learn still more highly to prize our own unparalleled political edifice, built with such fair proportions, on principles so harmonious and so just, that one part affords to another that support which, in its turn, it receives; while each lends strength, as well as stability to all?

How slender is the security of unlimited power, let the ephemeral reigns of eastern despots declare! A prince who governs a free people, enjoys a safety which no despotic sovereign ever possessed. The latter rules singly; and where a revolution is meditated, the change of a single person is soon effected. But where a sovereign's power is incorporated with the powers of parliament, and the will of the people who elect parliaments, the kingly state is fenced in with, and intrenched by the other states. He relies not solely upon an army. He relies on his parliament, and on his people,—a sure resource, while he involves his interests with theirs! This is the happiness, the beauty, and the strength of that three-fold bond which ties our constitution together. Counsellors may mislead, favourites may betray, even armies may desert, and navies may mutiny, but LAWS, as they are the surest guides of action, so are they the surest guards from danger.

Well might the view of this well-founded power produce the remark which it drew forth from a sagacious Frenchman,* who was comparing the solid constitutional authority of the British monarch, with the more specious, but less secure fabric of the despotism of the kings of France—'That a king of England, who acted according to the laws, was the greatest of all monarchs!'

But while the convulsions of other governments, built on less permanent principles, have riveted our affection to our own; and while an experimental acquaintance with the miseries of anarchy most naturally lead us, as subjects, to a strong sense of the duty of obedience:—with equal zeal would we wish it to be inculcated on princes, that they should be cautious never to multiply occasions for exacting that obedience; that they should use no unnecessary compulsion by seizing as a debt what good subjects are always willing to pay as a duty: and what is then only to be relied upon, when it is spontaneous and cordial.

It is observable, that those monarchs who have most sedulously contended for prerogative, have been among the feeblest and the least capable of exercising it; and that those who have struggled most earnestly for unjust power, have seldom enjoyed it themselves, but have made it over to mistresses and favourites. This is particularly exemplified in two of our weakest and most unhappy princes, Edward II. and Richard II.—Whether it was that this very imbecility made them more contentious about their prerogative, and more obstinate in resisting the demands of parliament; or that their favourites stimulated them to exactions, the benefit of which was to be transferred to themselves. The character of Edward III. (notwithstanding his faults) was consistently magnanimous. He was not more brave than just. He was attentive to the dignity of his crown in proportion to that magnanimity, and to the creation and execution of laws in proportion to that justice; and he took no important steps without the advice of parliament. The wretched reign and miserable catastrophe of each of the two first-named princes, furnish a striking contrast to the energy and popularity of the last; of whom Hume observes, 'that his domestic government was even more admirable than his foreign conquests;' and of whom Selden says, 'that one would think by his actions that he never was at home, and by his laws that he never was abroad.'

A wise and virtuous prince will ever bear in mind the grand distinction between his own situation and that of his minister. The latter is but the precarious possessor of a transient authority; a mere tenant at will, or, at most, for life. He himself is the hereditary and permanent possessor of the property. The former may be more tempted to adopt measures which, though gainful or gratifying at the present, will be probably productive of future mischief to the estate. But surely the latter may be justly expected to take a longer and wider view; and considering

* Gourville.

the interests of his posterity no less than his own, to reject all measures which are likely to disparage their inheritance, or injure their tenure. He will trace the misfortunes of our first Charles to the usurpation of the Tudors; and mark but too natural a connexion between the unprincipled domination and profuse magnificence of Louis XIV., and the melancholy fate of his far better and more amiable successor. He will remember the solid answer of the Spartan king, who being reproached by a superficial observer with having left the regal power impaired to his posterity, replied, 'No; for he had left it more *secure*, therefore more *permanent*.' A large and just conception of interest, therefore, no less than of duty, will prompt a wise prince to reject all measures which, while they appear to flatter the love of dominion, naturally inherent in the mind of man, by holding forth the present extension of his power, yet tend obstinately to weaken its essential strength, to make his authority the object of his people's jealousy, rather than of their affection; to cause it to rest on the uncertain basis of military power, rather than on the deep and durable foundations of the constitution.

In order to enable him the better, therefore, to know the true nature and limits of his authority, he will endeavour to develope the constitutional foundations on which it rests. Sovereigns, even female sovereigns, though they cannot have leisure to become fully acquainted with the vast mass of our laws, ought at least to imbibe the spirit of them. If they be not early taught the general principles of our laws and constitution, they may be liable, from the flatterers to whom they may be exposed, to hear of nothing but the power which they may exert, or the influence which they may exercise, without having their attention directed to those counteracting principles, which, in a limited monarchy like ours, serve, in numberless ways, to balance and restrain that power.

It should be worked into a principle in the mind, that it is in consideration of the duties which the laws impose on a prince, that those laws have secured to him either dignity or prerogative; it being a maxim of the law, that protection and allegiance are reciprocal. With the impression of the power, the splendour, and the dignity of royalty, the ideas of trust, duty, and responsibility, should be inseparably interwoven. It should be assiduously inculcated, that the LAWS form the very basis of the throne; the root and ground-work of the monarch's political existence. One peculiar reason why a prince ought to know so much of the laws and constitution, as to be able to determine what is, and what is not, an infringement of them, is, that he may be quick sighted to the slightest approximation of ministers towards any such encroachments. A farther reason is, that by studying the laws and constitution of the country, he may become more firmly attached to them, not merely by national instinct, and fond prejudice, because they are his *own*, but from judgment, reason, knowledge, discrimination, preference, habit, obligation,—in a word, because they are the *best*.

But as this superficial sketch proposes not to be an essay on political, but moral instruction, these remarks are only hazarded, in order to intimate the peculiar turn which the royal education ought to take. If a sovereign of England be, in such a variety of respects, supreme, it follows, not only that his education should be liberal, large, and general, but that it should, moreover, be directed to a knowledge of those departments in which he will be called to preside.

As supreme magistrate and the source of all judicial power, he should be adequately acquainted, not only with the law of nature and of nations, but particularly with the law of England. As possessing the power of declaring war, and contracting alliances, he should be thoroughly conversant with those authors who, with the soundest judgment, the deepest moral views, and the most correct precision, treat of the great principles of political justice; who best unfold the rights of human nature, and the mischiefs of unjust ambition. He should be competently acquainted with the present state of the different governments of Europe, with which that of Great Britain may have any political relation; and he should be led to exercise that intuitive discernment of character and talents, which will enable him to decide on the choice of ambassadors, and other foreign ministers, whom it is his prerogative to appoint.

As he is the fountain of honour, from which proceed titles, distinctions, and offices, he should be early accustomed to combine a due attention to character, with the examination of claims, and the appreciation of services; in order that the honours of the subject may reflect no dishonour on the prince. Those whose distinguished lot it is to bestow subordinate offices and inferior dignities, should evince, by the judgment with which they confer them, how fit they themselves are to discharge the highest.

Is he supreme head of the church? Hence arises a strong obligation to be acquainted with ecclesiastical history in general, as well as with the history of the church of England in particular. He should learn, not merely from habit and prescription, but from an attentive comparison of our national church with other ecclesiastical institutions, to discern both the distinguishing characters and appropriate advantages of our church establishment. He ought to inquire in what manner its interests are interwoven with those of the state, so far as to be inseparable from them. He should learn, that from the supreme power, with which the laws invest him over the church, arises a most awful responsibility, especially in the grand prerogative of bestowing the higher ecclesiastical appointments; a trust which involves consequences far too extensive for human minds to calculate; and which a sovereign, even amid all the dazzling splendour of royalty, while he preserves tenderness of conscience, and quickness of sensibility, will not reflect on without trepidation. While history offers numberless instances of the abuse of this power, it records numberless striking examples of its proper application. It even presents some, in which good sense has operated usefully in the absence of all principle.—When a profligate ecclesiastic applied for preferment to the profligate duke of Orleans, while regen

of France, urging as a motive, that he should be dishonoured if the duke did not make him a bishop—'And I,' replied the regent, 'shall be dishonoured if I do.'

CHAP. V

On the importance of studying Ancient History.

Those pious persons do not seem to understand the true interests of Christianity, who forbid the study of pagan literature. That it is of little value, comparatively with Christian learning, does not prove it to be altogether without its usefulness. In the present period of critical investigation, heathen learning seems to be justly appreciated, in the scale of letters; the wisdom and piety of some of our most eminent contemporaries having successfully applied it to its noblest office, by rendering it subservient to the purposes of Revelation, in multiplying the evidences, and illustrating the proofs. Thus the Christian emperor, when he destroyed the heathen temples, consecrated the golden vessels, to adorn the Christian churches.

In this enlightened period, Religion, our religion at least, does not, as in her days of darkness, feel it necessary to degrade human learning, in order to withdraw herself from scrutiny. The time is past, when it was produced as a serious charge against saint Jerome, that he had read Homer; when a doctor of the Sorbonne penitently confessed, among his other sins, that the exquisite muse of Virgil had made him weep for the woes of Dido; and when the works of Tacitus were condemned to the flames, from the papal chair, because the author was not a Roman Catholic. It is also curious to observe a papist persecuting the memory of a pagan on the ground of his *superstition!* Pope Gregory the great, expelled Livy from every Christian library on this account!

The most acute enemy of Christianity, the emperor Julian, who had himself been bred a Christian and a scholar, well understood what was most likely to hurt its cause. He knew the use which the Christians were making of ancient authors, and of rhetoric, in order to refute error, and establish truth.—'They fight us,' said he, 'by the knowledge of our own authors; shall we suffer ourselves to be stabbed with our own swords?' He actually made a law to interdict their reading Homer and Demosthenes; prohibited to their schools the study of antiquity, and ordered that they should confine themselves, to the explanation of Matthew and Luke, in the churches of the Galileans.

It can never be too soon, for the royal pupil, to begin to collect materials for reflection, and for action. Her future character will much depend on the course of reading, the turn of temper, the habit of thought now acquired, and the standard of morals now fixed. The acquisition of present taste will form the elements of her subsequent character. Her present acquirements, it is true, will need to be matured by her after experience; but experience will operate to comparatively little purpose, where only a slender stock has been laid in for it to work upon; and where these materials for forming the character have not been previously prepared. Things must be known before they are done. The part should be studied before it is acted, if we expect to have it acted well.

Where much is to be learned, time must be economised; and in the judicious selection of pagan literature, the discernment of the preceptor will be particularly exercised. All those writers, however justly celebrated, who have employed much learning, in elaborating points which add little to the practical wisdom or virtue of mankind; all such as are rather curious than useful, or ingenious than instructive, should be passed over; nor need she bestow much attention on points, which, though they may have been accurately discussed, are not seriously important. Dry critical knowledge, though it may be correctly just; and mere chronicles of events, though they may be strictly true, teach not the things she wants. Such authors as Sallust, who, in speaking of turbulent innovators, remarks, *that they thought the very disturbance of things established a sufficient bribe to set them at work:* those who, like this exquisite historian, unfold the internal principles of action, and dissect the hearts and minds of their personages, who develope complicated circumstances, furnish a clue to trace the labyrinth of causes and effects, and assign to every incident its proper motive, will be eminently useful. But, if she be taught to discern the merits of writers, it is that she may become not a critic in books, but in human nature.

History is the glass by which the royal mind should be dressed. If it be delightful for a private individual to enter with the historian into every scene which he describes, and into every event which he relates; to be introduced into the interior of the Roman senate, or the Athenian areopagus; to follow Pompey to Pharsalia, Miltiades to Marathon, or Marlborough to Blenheim; how much more interesting will this be to a sovereign? To him for whom senates debate, for whom armies engage, and who is himself to be a prime actor in the drama! Of how much more importance is it to *him*, to possess an accurate knowledge of all the successive governments of that world, in a principal government of which he is one day to take the lead. To possess himself of the experience of ancient states, of the wisdom of every antecedent age! To learn moderation from the ambition of one, caution from the rashness of another, and prudence perhaps from the indiscretion of both! To apply foregone examples to his own use; adopting what is excellent, shunning what is erroneous, and omitting what is irrelevant!

Reading and observation are the two grand sources of improvement; but they lie not equally open to all. From the latter, the sex and habits of a royal female, in a good measure, exclude her. She must then, in a greater degree, depend on the formation which books afford, opened and illustrated by her preceptor. Though her personal observation must be limited, her advantages from historical sources may be large and various.

If history for a time, especially during the

reign of the prince whose actions are recorded, sometimes misrepresent characters, the dead, even the royal dead, are seldom flattered; unless, which indeed too frequently happens, the writer is deficient in that just conception of moral excellence, which teaches to distinguish what is splendid from what is solid. But, sooner or later, history does justice. She snatches from oblivion, or reproach, the fame of those virtuous men, whom corrupt princes, not contented with having sacrificed them to their unjust jealousy, would rob also of their fair renown. When Arulenus Rusticus was condemned by Domitian, for having written with its deserved eulogium, the life of that excellent citizen, Thrasea Pœtus; when Senecio was put to death by the same emperor, for having rendered the like noble justice to Helvidius Priscus—when the historians themselves, like the patriots whom they celebrated were sentenced to death, their books also being condemned to the flames; when Fannia, the incomparable wife of Helvidius, was banished, having the courage to carry into exile that book which had been the cause of it; a book of which her conjugal piety had furnished the materials,—'In the fire which consumed these books,' says the author of the life of Agricola, the tyrants imagined that they had stifled the very utterance of the Roman people, abolished the lawful power of the senate, and forced mankind to doubt of the very evidence of their senses. Having expelled philosophy, and exiled science, they flattered themselves that nothing, which bore the stamp of virtue, would exist.* —But history has vindicated the noble sufferers. Pœtus and Helvidius will ever be ranked among the most honourable patriots; while the emperor, who, in destroying their lives could not injure their reputation, is consigned to eternal infamy.

The examples which history records, furnish faithful admonitions to succeeding princes, respecting the means by which empires are erected and overturned. They show by what arts of wisdom, or by neglect of those arts, little states become great, or great states fall into ruin; with what equity or injustice wars have been undertaken; with what ability or incapacity they have been conducted; with what sagacity or short-sightedness treaties have been formed. How national faith hath been maintained, or forfeited. How confederacies have been made, or violated. History, which is the amusement of other men, is the school of princes. They are not to read it merely as the rational occupation of a vacant hour, but to consult it, as a storehouse of materials for the art of government.

There is a splendour in heroic actions, which fires the imagination, and forcibly lays hold on the passions. Hence, the poets were the first, and, in the rude ages of antiquity, the only historians. They seized on whatever was dazzling, in character, or shining in action; exaggerated heroic qualities, immortalized patriotism, and deified courage. But instead of making their heroes patterns to men, they lessened the utility of their example by elevating them into gods.

* Beginning of Tacitus's life of Agricola.

Hence however arose the first idea of history; of snatching the deeds of illustrious men from the delusions of fable; of bringing down extravagant powers, and preter-natural faculties within the limits of human nature and possibility; and reducing overcharged characters to the size and shape of real life; giving proportion, order and arrangement to the widest scheme of action, and to the most extended duration of time.

CHAP. VI.

Laws—Egypt—Persia.

But however the fictions of poetry might have given being to history, it was sage political institutions, good governments, and wise laws which formed both its solid basis, and its valuable superstructure. And it is from the labours of ancient legislators, the establishment of states, the foundation of government, and the progress of civil society, that we are to look for more real greatness, and more useful instruction, than from all the extravagant exploits recorded in fabulous ages of antiquity.

So deep is the reverential awe which mankind have uniformly blended with the idea of laws, that almost all civilized nations have affected to wrap up the origin of them in the obscurity of a devout mystery, and to intimate that they sprang from a divine source. This has arisen partly from a love to the marvellous, inherent in the human mind; partly from the vanity of a national fondness in each country for losing their original in the trackless paths of impenetrable antiquity. Of the former of those tastes, a legislator, like Numa, who had deep views and who knew how much the people reverence whatever is mysterious, would naturally avail himself. And his supposed divine communication was founded in his consummate knowledge of the human mind; a knowledge which a wise prince will always turn to good account.

But, however the mysteriousness of the origin of laws may excite the reverence of the vulgar, it is the wise only who will duly venerate their sanctity, as they alone can appreciate their value. Laws are providentially designed, not only to be the best subsidiary aid of Religion, where she is operative, but to be in some sort her substitute, in those instances where her own direct operations might be ineffectual. For, even where the immediate law of God is little regarded, the civil code may be externally efficient, from its sanctions being more visible, palpable, tangible. And human laws are directly fitted to restrain the outward acts of those, whose hearts are not influenced by the divine injunctions. Laws, therefore, are the surest fences of the best blessings of civilized life. They bind society together, while they strengthen the separate interests of those whom they reciprocally unite. They tie the hands of depredation in the poor, and of oppression in the rich: protect the weak against the encroachments of the powerful, and draw their sacred

shelter round all that is dear in domestic, or valuable in social life. They are the truest guardians of the dignity of the throne, and the only rampart of the liberty of the people.

On the law of nature, and the law of revelation (where revelation is known) all human laws ought to depend. That a rule of civil conduct should be prescribed to man, by the state in which he lives, is made necessary by nature, as well as sanctioned by revelation. Were man an insulated being, the law of nature, and of revelation, would suffice for him; but, for aggregate man, something more than even municipal laws becomes requisite. Divided as human beings are, into separate states, and societies, connected among themselves, but disconnected with other states, each requires with relation to the other, certain general rules, called the law of nations, as much as each state needs respecting itself, those distinct codes, which are suited to their own particular exigencies. On the whole, then, as the natural sense of weakness and fear impels man to seek the protection, and the blessing of laws, so from the experience of that protection, and the sense of that blessing, his reason derives the most powerful argument to desire their perpetuation; and his providential destiny becomes his choice.

If, therefore, we would truly estimate the value of laws, let us figure to ourselves the misery of that state of nature in which there should be no law, but that of the strongest; no judge to determine right, or to punish wrong; to redress suffering, or to repel injury; to protect the weak, or to control the powerful.

If, under the prevalence of a false, and even absurd religion, several ancient states, that of Egypt in particular subsisted in so much splendour* for so long a period, and afterwards sunk into such abject depression, the causes of both are obvious. The LAWS of ancient Egypt were proverbial for their wisdom. It has not escaped several christian historians that it was the human praise of him who was ordained to be the legislator of God's own people, that *he was skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians.* And it was meant to confer an high eulogium on the wisest of the kings of Israel, that his wisdom eclipsed that of Egypt.

The laws of this state so strongly enforced mercy, that they punished with death those who refused to save the life of a fellow-creature if attacked, when it was in their power. The justice of the Egyptian laws was so inflexible, that the kings obliged the judges to swear that they would never depart from the principles of rectitude, though even in obedience to the royal command. Their respect for individual virtue, and for that reputation which follows it, was so high, that a kind of moral inquisition was appointed, on the death of every citizen, to inquire what sort of life he had lived, that his memory might be accordingly held in honour or detestation. From the verdict of this solemn tribunal, even their kings themselves were not exempted.

The whole aim and end of education among them was to inspire a veneration for GOVERNMENT and RELIGION. They had a law which assigned some employment to every individual of the state. And though the genius of our free constitution would justly reprobate what indeed its temperate and judicious restraints render unnecessary among us, that clause which directed that the employment should be perpetuated in the same family, yet, perhaps, the severe moralist, with the example of the well-ordered government of Egypt before his eyes, might reasonably doubt whether a law, the effect of which was to keep men in their places, though it might now and then check the career of a lofty genius, was not a much less injury to society than the free scope which was afforded to the turbulent ambition of every aspiring spirit in the Greek democracies. Bossuet, who has, perhaps, penetrated more deeply into these subjects than almost any modern, has pronounced Egypt to be the fountain of all political wisdom.

What afterwards plunged the Egyptians into calamity, and brought final dissolution on their government? It was a departure from its constitutional principles; it was the neglect and contempt of those venerable laws which for *sixteen centuries* had constituted their glory and their happiness. They exchanged the love of their wise domestic institutions for the ambition of subduing distant countries. One of their most heroic sovereigns (as is not unusual) was the instrument of their misfortunes. Sesostris was permitted by Divine Providence to diminish the true glory of Egypt, by a restless ambition to extend her territory. This splendid prince abandoned the real grandeur of governing wisely at home for the false glory of foreign conquests, which detained him nine years in distant climates. At a remote period, the people, weary of the blessings they had so long enjoyed under a single monarch, weakened the royal power, by dividing it among multiplied sovereigns.

What exalted the ancient Persians to such lasting fame? The equity and strict execution of their LAWS. It was their sovereign disdain of falsehood in their public transactions. Their considering fraud as the most degrading of vices, and thus transfusing the spirit of their laws into their conduct. It was that love of justice (modern statesmen would do well to imitate the example) which made them oblige themselves to commend the virtues of their enemies. It was such an extraordinary respect for education, that no sorrow was ever expressed for young persons who died uninstructed. It was by paying such an attention to the children of the sovereign, that, at the age of fourteen, they were placed under the care of four statesmen who excelled in different talents. By one they were instructed in the principles of justice; by an-

* It is to be observed that this splendour alludes to the prosperity arising from wise political institutions merely; for the private morals of Egypt must have borne some proportion to her corrupt idolatry, which afterwards became of the most degrading and preposterous kind. Her wisdom, we must therefore infer, was chiefly *political* wisdom. Her morality seems to have been; in a good measure, cultivated with a view to aggrandize the state, and in violation of many natural feelings, as was the case in Sparta. Egypt was a well compacted political society, and her virtue appears to have been the effect of political discipline. In enumerating her merits, *our* object is to prove the great importance of laws.

other they were taught to subdue sensuality; by a third they were initiated in the art of government; and by a fourth in the duties of religion. Plato has given a beautiful sketch of this accomplished and sublime education.

It will be found that nearly the same causes which forwarded the ruin of Egypt, contributed to destroy Persia; a dereliction of those fundamental principles of legislation and morals to which it had been indebted for its long prosperity and grandeur.

But be it remembered, that the best human laws will not be exempt from the imperfection inseparably bound up with all human things. Let us beware, however, of those innovators who, instead of carefully improving and vigourously executing those laws which are already established, adopt no remedies short of destruction; tolerate no improvement short of creation; who are carried away by a wild scheme of visionary perfection, which, if it could any where be found to exist, would not be likely to be found in the projects of men who disdain to avail themselves of ancient experience and progressive wisdom. Thucydides was a politician of another cast; for he declared, that even indifferent laws, vigilantly executed, were superior to the best that were not properly obeyed. Those modern reformists, who affect to be in raptures with the Greek republics, would do well to imitate the deliberation, the slowness, the doubt with which the founder of the Athenian legislation introduced his laws. Instead of those sudden and instantaneous constitutions we have witnessed, which, disdaining the slow growth of moral births, have started at once, full grown, from the brain of the projector, and were as suddenly superseded as rapidly produced; Solon would not suffer a single law to be determined on and accepted till the first charm of novelty was past, and the first heat of enthusiasm had cooled. What would the same capricious theorists say to that reverence with which the Egyptians, above cited, regarded antiquity, example, custom, law, prescription? This sage people considered every political novelty with a jealousy equal to the admiration with which it is regarded by the new school. Trial, proof, experience, was the slow criterion by which they ventured to decide on the excellence of any institution. While, to the licentious innovator, antiquity is ignorance, custom is tyranny, order is intolerance, laws are chains. But the end has corresponded with the beginning. Their 'baseless fabrics' have fallen to pieces before they were well reared; and have exposed their superficial, but self-sufficient builders, to the just derision of mankind.

CHAP. VII.

Greece.

When we contemplate Greece, and especially when we fix our eyes on Athens, our admiration is strongly, I had almost said, is irresistibly excited, in reflecting, that such a diminutive spot concentrated within itself whatever is great and eminent in almost every point of view; whatever confers distinction on the human intellect; whatever is calculated to inspire wonder, or communicate delight. Athens was the pure well-head of poetry:

> Hither, as to their fountain, other stars
> Repairing, in their golden urns draw light.

It was the theatre of arms, the cradle of the arts, the school of philosophy, and the parent of eloquence.

To be regarded as the masters in learning, the oracle of taste, and the standard of politeness, to the whole civilized world, is a splendid distinction. But it is a pestilent mischief, when the very renown attending such brilliant advantages becomes the vehicle for carrying into other countries the depraved manners by which these pre-eminent advantages are accompanied. This was confessedly the case of Greece with respect to Rome. Rome had conquered Greece by her arms; but whenever a subjugated country contributes, by her vices, to enslave the state which conquered her, she amply revenges herself.

But the perils of this contamination do not terminate with their immediate consequences. The ill effects of Grecian manners did not cease with the corruptions which they engendered at Rome. There is still serious danger, lest, while the ardent and high spirited young reader contemplates Greece only through the splendid medium of her heroes and her artists, her poets and her orators; while his imagination is fired with the glories of conquest, and captivated with the charms of literature, that he may lose sight of the disorders, the corruptions, and the crimes, by which Athens, the famous seat of arts and of letters, was dishonoured. May he not be tinctured (allowing for change of circumstances) with something of that spirit which inflamed Alexander, when, as he was passing the Hydaspes, he enthusiastically exclaimed, 'O Athenians! could you believe to what dangers I expose myself, for the sake of being celebrated by you!'

Many of the Athenian vices originated in the very nature of their constitution; in the very spirit of that turbulent democracy which Solon could not restrain, nor the ablest of his successors control. The great founder of their legislation felt the dangers inseparable from the democratic form of government, when he declared, 'that he had not given them the best laws, but the best which they were able to bear.' In the very establishment of his institutions, he betrayed his distrust of this species of government, by those guards and ramparts which he was so assiduous in providing and multiplying. Knowing himself to be incapable of setting aside the popular power, his attention was directed to divest it, as much as possible, of its mischiefs, by the entrenchments that he strove to cast about it. His sagacious mind anticipated the ill effects of that republican restlessness, that at length completely overturned the state which it had so often menaced, and so constantly distracted.

This unsettled government, which left the country perpetually exposed to the tyranny of the few, and the turbulence of the many, was never bound together by any principle of union,

by any bond of interest, common to the whole community, except when the general danger, for a time, annihilated the distinction of separate interests. The restraint of laws was feeble; the laws themselves were often contradictory; often ill administered; popular intrigues, and tumultuous assemblies, frequently obstructing their operation. The noblest services were not seldom rewarded with imprisonment, exile, or assassination. Under every change, confiscation and proscription were never at a stand; and the only way of effacing the impression of any revolution which had produced these outrages, was to promote a new one, which engendered in its turn, fresh outrages, and improved upon the antecedent disorders.

By this light and capricious people, acute in their feelings, carried away by every sudden gust of passion, as mutable in their opinions as unjust in their decisions, the most illustrious patriots were first sacrificed, and then honoured with statues; their heroes were murdered as traitors, and then reverenced as gods. This wanton abuse of authority, this rash injustice, and fruitless repentance, would be the inevitable consequence of lodging supreme power in the hands of a vain and variable populace, inconstant in their very vices, perpetually vibrating between irretrievable crimes and ineffectual regrets.

That powerful oratory, which is to us so just a subject of admiration, was, doubtless, no inconsiderable cause of the public disorders. And to that exquisite talent, which constitutes one of the chief boasts of Athens, we may look for one principal source of her disorders:

> Those ancients, whose resistless eloquence
> Wielded at will the fierce Democracy,
> Shook th' arsenal and fulmined over Greece
> To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne.

When we consider what mighty influence this talent gave to the popular leaders, and what a powerful engine their demagogues possessed, to work upon the passions of the multitude, who composed their popular assemblies; when we reflect on the character of those crowds, on whom this strirring eloquence was exercised, and remember that their opinion decided on the fate of the country: all this will contribute to account for the frequency and violence of the public commotions, and naturally explains why that rhetorical genius, which shed so bright a lustre on the country, was, from the nature of the constitution, frequently the instrument of convulsing it.

While the higher class, in many of the Greek republics, seemed without scruple to oppress their inferiors, the populace of Athens commonly exerted the same hostile spirit of resentment against their leaders.—Competition, circumvention, litigation, every artifice of private fraud, every stratagem of personal injustice, filled up the short intervals of foreign wars and public contests. How strikingly is St. Paul's definition of that light and frivolous propensity of the Athenians which led them to pass the day only 'to hear or tell some new thing,' illustrated by Plutarch's relation of the illiterate citizen, who voted Aristides to the punishment of the Ostracism! When this great man questioned his accuser, whether Aristides had ever injured him? He replied, so far from it, that he did not even know him, only he was quite *wearied out* with hearing him every where called *the just*. Besides that spirit of envy which is peculiarly alive in democracies, to have heard this excellent person calumniated would have been a refreshing novelty, and have enabled him, to 'tell a new thing.'

That passionate fondness for scenic diversions which led the Athenians not only to apply part of the public money to the support of the theatres, and to pay for the admission of the populace, but also made it a capital crime to divert this fund to any other service, even to the service of the state, so sacred was this application of it deemed was another concurrent cause of the profligacy of public manners.* The abuses to which this universal invitation to luxury and idleness led; the licentiousness of that purely democratic spirit, which made the lowest classes claim as a right to partake in the diversions of the highest; the pernicious productions of some of the comic poets; the unbounded license introduced by the mask; the voluptuousness of their music, whose extraordinary effects it would be impossible to believe, were they not confirmed by the general voice of antiquity: all these concurring circumstances induced a depravation of morals of which less enlightened countries do not often present an example. The profane and impure Aristophanes was almost adored, while the virtue of Socrates not only procured him a violent death, but the poet, by making the philosopher contemptible to the populace, paved the way to his unjust sentence by the judges. Nay, perhaps the delight which the Athenians took in the impious and offensively loose wit of this dramatic poet rendered them more deaf to the voice of that virtue which was taught by Plato and of that liberty in which they had once gloried, and which Demosthenes continued to thunder in their ears. Their rage for sensual pleasure rendered them a fit object for the projects of Philip, and a ready prey to the attacks of Alexander.

In lamenting, however, the corruptions of the theatre in Athens, justice compels us to acknowledge, that her immortal tragic poets, by their chaste and manly compositions, furnish a noble exception. In no country has decency and purity, and, to the disgrace of Christian countries, let it be added, have morality, and even piety, been so generally prevalent in any theatrical compositions as in what.

* Pericles, not being rich enough to supplant his competitor by acts of liberality, procured this law with a view to make his court to the people. He scrupled not, in order to secure their attachment to his person and government, by thus 'buying them with their own money,' effectually to promote their natural levity and idleness, and to corrupt their morals.—The rulers of a neighbouring nation have been too skilful adepts in the art of corruption, not to admire and eagerly adopt an example so suited to their political circumstances, and so congenial to their national frivolity. Accordingly, an unexampled multitude of theatres have been opened; and in order to allay the discontents of the lower class at the expense of their time and morals, the price of these diversions has been reduced so low as almost to emulate the gratuitous admission of the Athenian populace.

——her lofty grave tragedians taught
In chorus, or iambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence.

Yet, in paying a just and warm tribute to the moral excellencies of these sublime dramatists, is not an answer provided to that long agitated question, Whether the stage can be indeed made a school of morals? No question had ever a fairer chance for decision than was here afforded. If it be allowed that there never was a more profligate city than Athens; if it be equally indisputable that never country possessed more unexceptionable dramatic poets than Eschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; if the same city thus at once produced the best physicians and the worst patients, what is the result? Do the Athenian annals record that any class or condition of citizens were actually reformed by constantly frequenting, we had almost said, by constantly living in the theatre?

Plutarch, who severely condemns the Athenians, had too just a judgment to censure either the excellence of the poets, or the good taste of the people who admired them. But he blames them for that excessive passion for diversions, 'which,' says he, 'by setting up a new object of attachment, had nearly extinguished public virtue, and made them more anxious about the fate of a play than about the fate of their country.'*

Such were the manners which historians, orators, and poets have consigned to immortal fame! Such were the people for whom our highly educated youth are taught to feel an enthusiastic admiration! Such are the forms of government which have excited the envy, and partly furnished the model to the bloody innovators and frantic politicians of our age! Madly to glory in the dream of liberty, and to be in fact the victim of changing tyrants, but unchanging tyranny. This was the coveted lot of ancient Athens.—This is the object of reverence, eulogy, and imitation to a large portion of modern Europe!

In reflecting on the splendid works of genius and of art in Athens, as opposed to the vices of her government, and the licentiousness of her morals,—will it be thought an adequate compensation for the corruptions of both, if we grant, as we are disposed to do, in its fullest extent, that unparalleled combination of talents, which delighted and informed the rest of the world? If we allow that this elegance of taste spread so wide, and descended so low, that every individual of an Athenian mob might, as has been triumphantly asserted,† be a just critic of dramatic composition? That the ear of the populace was so nicely tuned and so refined a judge of the delicacies of pronunciation, than an Attic herb-woman could detect the provincial accent of a learned philosopher? Is it even a sufficient compensation, exquisite as we allow the gratification to have been, that the spectator might range among the statues of Lysippus, or the pictures of Apelles, or the critic enjoy the still more intellectual luxury of listening to an oration of Demosthenes, of a scene of Euripides,—while the rulers of so accomplished a people were in general dissolute, tyrannical, oppressive, and unjust; and the people themselves universally sunk into the most degraded state of manners; immersed in the last excess of effeminacy; debased by the most excessive sensuality, fraud, idleness, avarice, gaming, and debauchery?

If here and there the eye is relieved, and the feelings are refreshed, with the casual appearance of a Miltiades, a Cimon, an Aristides, a Socrates, a Phocion, or a Xenophon; yet these thinly scattered stars serve less to retrieve the Athenian character, by their solitary lustre, or even by their confluent radiance, than to overwhelm it with disgrace, by the atrocious injustice with which these bright luminaries were treated by their country. The eulogium of the citizen is the satire of the state.

While we observe that Greece first became powerful, rich, and great, through the energy of her people, and the vigour of her character, and that this very greatness, power, and riches, have a natural bias towards corruption; that while they happily tend to produce and nourish those arts, which in their just measure are the best embellishments of a nation; yet carried to excess, and misapplied to vicious purposes, tend to weaken and corrupt it; that Athens, by her public and private vices, and by her very refinement in politeness, and her devotedness to the arts, not only precipitated her own ruin,—but by the transplantation of those arts, encumbered with those vices, ultimately contributed to ruin Rome also. While we take this retrospect, we, of this highly favoured land, may receive an awful admonition; we may make a most instructive comparison of our own situation with respect to a neighbouring nation,—a nation which, under the rapidly-shifting form of every mode of government, from the despotism of absolute monarchy to a republican anarchy, to which the royal tyranny was comparative freedom;—and now again, in the closing scene of this changeful drama, to the heavy subjugation of military despotism, has never ceased to be the object of childish admiration, of passionate fondness, and servile imitation, to too many in our own country; to persons, too, whose rank giving them the greatest stake in it, have most to risk by the assimilation with her manners, and most to lose by the adoption of her principles. And though, through the special Providence and undeserved mercies of God, we have withstood the flood of revolutionary doctrines, let us, taking warning from the resemblance above pointed out, no longer persist, as in the halcyon days of peace, servilely to adopt her language, habits, manners, and corruptions. For now to fill up the measure of our danger, her pictures, and her statues, not the fruits of her own genius—for here the comparison with Athens fails—but the plunder of her usurpation, and the spoils of her injustice, by holding out new baits to our curiosity, and new attractions to our admiration, are in danger of fatally and finally accomplishing the resemblance. May the omen be averted!

Among the numberless lessons which *we* may derive from the study of Grecian history, there is one which cannot be too often inculcated, more especially as it is a fact little relished by

* See Wortley Montague, on the Rise and Fall of Ancient Republics.

† See an elegant paper in the Adventurer, in which some of these triumphs of Athens are asserted.

many of our more refined wits and politicians,—we mean the error of ascribing to arts, to literature, and to politeness, that power of softening and correcting the human heart, which is, in truth, the exclusive prerogative of *religion*. Really to mend the heart, and purify the principle, is a deeper work than the most finished cultivation of the *taste* has ever been able to effect. The polished Athenians were among the most unjust of mankind in their national acts, and the most cruel towards their allies. They remarkably exemplify the tendency of *acting in a body*, to lessen each man's individual consciousness of guilt or cruelty. This polite people, in their political capacity, committed, without scruple, actions of almost unparalleled barbarity.

Every reflecting class of British and especially of Christian readers will not fail to peruse the annals of this admired republic with sentiments of deep gratitude to heaven for the vast superiority of our own national, civil, social, moral, and religious blessings. And they may enrich the catalogue with that one additional advantage, which Xenophon thought was all that Athens wanted, and which we possess—*We are an Island.** The sound and sober politician will see most strongly illustrated, in the evils of the Athenian state (though dissimilar in some respects from modern democracy) the blessings of our representative government, and of our deliverance from any approximation towards that mob government, to which universal suffrage would be the natural and necessary introduction.

The delicate and refined female of our favoured country will feel peculiar sensations of thankfulness, in comparing her happy lot with the degraded state of women in the politest ages of Greece. Condemned to ignorance, labour, and obscurity; excluded from rational intercourse; debarred from every species of intellectual improvement or innocent enjoyment; they never seem to have been the objects of respect or esteem; in the conjugal relation, the servile agent, not the endeared companion. Their depressed state was, in some measure, confirmed by illiberal legal institutions; and their native genius was systematically restrained from rising above one degraded level. Such was the lot of the *virtuous* part of the sex. We forbear to oppose to this gloomy picture the profligate renown to which the bold pretensions of daring vice elevated mercenary beauty; nor would we glance at the impure topic, but to remind our amiable countrywomen, that immodesty in dress, contempt of the sober duties of domestic life, a boundless appetite for pleasure, and a misapplied devotion to the arts, were among the steps which led to this systematic profession of shameless profligacy, and to the establishment of those countenanced corruptions which raised the more celebrated, but infamous, Athenian women

To that bad eminence.

Every description of men, who know how to estimate public good or private happiness will joyfully acknowledge the visible effect which Christianity has had independently of its influence over its real votaries) in improving and elevating the general standard of morals, so as considerably to rectify and raise the conduct of those who are not directly actuated by its principles. And, lastly, to say nothing of a pure church establishment, so diametrically the reverse of the deplorably blind and ignorant rites of Athenian worship,*—who can contemplate, without thankful heart, that large infusion of Christianity into our national laws, which has set them so infinitely above all comparison with the admired codes of Lycurgus and of Solon?

* See Montesquieu Esprit des Loix, vol. ii. p. 3.

CHAP. VIII.

Rome.

If the Romans from being a handful of banditti, rendered themselves in a short period lords of the universe;—if Rome, from being an ordinary town in Italy, became foremost in genius and in arms, and at length unrivalled in imperial magnificence; let it be remembered that the foundations of this greatness were laid in some of the extraordinary virtues of that republic. The personal frugality of her citizens; the remarkable simplicity of their manners; the habit of transferring from themselves to the state all pretensions to external consequence and splendour; the strictness of her laws, and the striking impartiality of their execution; that inflexible regard to justice, which led them, in the early ages of the republic—so little was the doctrine of *expediency* in repute among *them*—to inflict penalties on those citizens who even conquered by deceit, and not by valour; that vigilant attention to private morals which the establishment of a censorship secured, and that zeal for liberty, which was at the same time supported by her political constitution.—These causes were the true origin of the Roman greatness. This was the pedestal on which her colossal power was erected; and though she remained mistress of the world, even at a time when these virtues had begun to decline, the first impulse not having ceased to operate, yet a discerning eye might even then perceive her growing internal weakness, and might anticipate her final dissolution.

Republican Rome, however, has been much too highly panegyrised. The Romans, had, indeed, a public feeling, to which every kind of private affection gave way; and it is chiefly on the credit of their sacrificing their individual interests to the national cause, that they acquired so high a renown.

It may not be unworthy of remark, that the grand fundamental principle of the ancient republics (and though it was still more strikingly manifest in the Grecian, it was in no small degree the case with republican Rome) was different from that which constitutes the essential principle of the British constitution, and even opposite to it. In the former the *public* was every thing; the rights, the comforts, the very

* Acts of the Apostles, ch. xvii.

existence of *individuals*, were as nothing. With *us*, happily the case is very different, nay even exactly the reverse. The well-being of the whole community is provided for, by effectually securing the rights, the safety, the comforts of every individual. Among the ancients, the grossest acts of injustice against private persons were continually perpetrated and were regarded as beneath account, when they stood in the way of the will, the interests, the aggrandizement, the glory of the state. In *our* happier country, not the meanest subject can be injured in his person or his possessions. The little stock of the artisan, the peaceful cottage of the peasant, is secured to him by the universal superintendance, and the strong protection of the public force. The state is justly considered as made up of an aggregate of particular families; and it is by securing the well being of each, that all are preserved in prosperity. We could delight to descant largely on this topic; and surely the contemplation could not but warm the hearts of Britons with lively gratitude to the author of all their blessings, and with zealous attachment to that constitution, which conveys and secures to them the enjoyment of such unequalled happiness! But we dare not expatiate in so wide a field. Let us, however, remark the degree in which the benevolent spirit of Christianity is transfused into our political system. As it was the glory of our religion to take the poor under her instruction, and to administer her consolations to the wretched, so it is the beauty of our constitution that she considers not as below her care, the seats of humble but honest industry; the peaceful dwellings, and quiet employments of the lover of domestic comfort.

Again—This vital spirit of our constitution is favourable to virtue, as well as congenial with religion, and conducive to happiness. It checks that spirit of injustice and oppression which is so manifest in the conduct of the ancient republics towards all other nations. It tends to diffuse a general sense of moral obligation, a continual reference to the claims of others, and our own consequent obligations; in short, a continual reference to the *real* rights of man; a term which, though so shamefully abused, and converted into a watch-word of riot and rebellion, yet, truly and properly understood, is of sound meaning and constant application. By princes especially, these rights should ever be kept in remembrance. They were, indeed, never so well secured, as by that excellent injunction of our blessed Saviour, *to do to others as we would have them to do to us.* And to which the apostle's brief but comprehensive directions, form an admirable commentary; *Honour all men—Love your brethren—Fear God —Honour the king.*

But to return to the Romans; their very patriotism, by leading them to thirst for universal empire, finally destroyed them, being no less fatal to the morals, than to the greatness of the state. Even their vaunted public spirit partly originated in the necessities of their situation. They were a little state, surrounded by a multitude of other little states, and they had no safety but in union. 'Necessity first roused the genius of war, and the habits of experienced and successful valour kept him awake. The love of wealth and power, in latter ages, carried on what original bravery had begun; till, in the unavoidable vicissitude of human affairs, Rome perished beneath the weight of that pile of glory which she had been so long rearing.'*

Their laws and constitution were naturally calculated to promote their public spirit, and to produce their union. Having succeeded in repelling the attacks of the small rival powers, and, by their peculiar fortune, or rather by the designation of Providence, having become the predominating power in Italy, they proceeded to add conquest to conquest, making in the pride of conscious superiority, wars evidently the most unjust. Yet it must not be denied, that the occupation which progressive conquests found for the citizens, communicated a peculiar hardiness to the Roman character, and served to retard the growth both of luxury and faction. That public spirit which might be justified when it applied itself to wars of self-defence, became by degrees little better than the principle of a band of robbers on a great scale; at the best, of honourable robbers, who for the sake of the spoil, agree fairly to co-operate in order to obtain it, and divide it equally when it is obtained.

This public spirit seems to have existed so long as there were any objects of foreign ambition remaining, and so long as any sense was left to foreign danger. Even in the midst of unlawful and unrelenting war, it is important to bear in mind, that many of the ancient virtues were still assiduously cultivated; the laws were still had in reverence, and, in spite of a corrupt polytheism, and of many and great defects in the morality and the constitution of Rome, this was the salt which, for a time, preserved her. The firmness of character, and deep political sagacity of the Romans, seem to have borne an exact proportion to each other. That foreseeing wisdom, that penetrating policy, which led Montesquieu to observe, that they conquered the world by *maxims* and *principles*, seem in reality, to have insured the success of their conquests, almost more than their high national valour, and their bold spirit of enterprize.

What was it which afterwards plunged Rome into the lowest depths of degradation, and finally blotted her out from among the nations? It was her renouncing those *maxims* and *principles*. It was her departure from every virtuous and self-denying habit. It was the gradual relaxation of private morals. It was the substitution of luxury for temperance, and of a mean and narrow selfishness for public spirit. It was a contempt for the sober manners of the ancient republic, and a dereliction of the old principles of government, even while the forms of that government were retained. It was the introduction of a new philosophy more favourable to sensuality; it was the importation, by her Asiatic proconsuls, of every luxury which could pamper that sensuality. It was, in short, the evils, resulting from those two passions which monopolized their souls, the lust of power, and the lust of gold.—These passions operated on each other, as

* Carlo Denina on the ancient Republics of Italy.

cause and effect, action and reaction; and produced that rapid corruption which Sallust describes with so much spirit—*Mores majarum non paulatim ut antea, sed torrentis modo precipitati.* Profligacy, venality, peculation, oppression, succeed to that simplicity, patriotism, and high-minded disinterestedness, on which this nation had once so much valued itself, and which had attracted the admiration of the world. So that Rome, in the days of her pristine severity of manners, and Rome in the last period of her freedom, exhibits a stronger contrast than will be found between almost any two countries.

This depravation does not refer to solitary instances, to the shamelessness of a Verres, or the profligacy of a Piso, but to the general practice of avowed corruption and systematic venality. By the just judgment of Providence, the enjoyment of the spoils brought home from the conquered nations corrupted the conquerors; and at length compelled Rome, in her turn, both to fly before her enemies, and to bow down her head under the most intolerable domestic yoke. Rome had no more the spirit to make any faint struggle for liberty after the death of Cæsar, than Greece after that of Alexander, though to each the occasion seemed to present itself. Neither state had virtue enough left to deserve, or even to desire to be free. The wisdom of Cato should, in the case of Rome, have discovered this: and it should have spared him the fruit less attempt to restore liberty to a country which its vices had enslaved, and have preserved him, even on his own principles, from self-destruction.

Among the causes of the political servitude of Rome may be reckoned, in a considerable degree, the institution of the Pretorian bands, who, in a great measure, governed both the Romans and the emperors. These Pretorian bands presented the chief difficulty in the way of good emperors, some of whom they destroyed for attempting to reform them; and of the bad emperors they were the electors.

In perusing the Roman history, these, and other causes of the decline and fall of the empire, should be carefully shown; the tendency of private vices to produce factions, and the tendency of factions to overthrow liberty; a spirit of dissension, and a rapid deterioration of morals, being in all states, the most deadly, and, indeed, the inseparable symptoms of expiring freedom. The no less baneful influence of arbitrary power, in the case of the many profligate and cruel emperors who succeeded, should be clearly pointed out.

It is also a salutary lesson on the hunger of conquest, and the vanity of ambition, to trace the Roman power, by its vast accession of territory, losing in solidity what it gained in expansion; furnishing a lasting example to future empires, who trust too much for the stability of their greatness to the deceitful splendour of remote acquisition, and the precarious support of distant colonial attachment.

Above all, the fall of Rome may be attributed, in no small degree, to the progress, and, gradually to the prevalence of the epicurean philosophy, and to its effect in taking away that reverence for the gods, which alone could preserve that deep sense of the sanctity of oaths for which Rome, in her better days, had been so distinguished. She had originally established her political system on this fear of the gods; and the people continued, as appears from Livy, to practise the duties of their religion* (such as it was) more scrupulously than any other ancient nation. The most amiable of the Roman patriots attributes the antecedent success and grandeur of his country to their conviction, 'that all events are directed by a Divine Power;† and Polybius, speaking merely as a politician, accuses some, in his age, of rashness and absurdity, for endeavouring to extirpate the fear of the gods; declaring, that what others held to be an object of disgrace, he believed to be the very thing by which the republic was sustained. He illustrates his position by adducing the conduct of the two great states, one of which, from its adoption of the doctrines of Epicurus had no sense of religion left, and consequently no reverence for the solemnities of an oath, which the other retained in its full force. 'If among the Greeks,' says he, 'a single talent only be intrusted to those who have the management of any of the public money, though they give ten written sureties, with as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, they are *unable* to discharge the trust reposed in them with integrity,—while the Romans, who, in their magistracies and embassies, disburse the greatest sums, are prevailed on by *the single obligation of an oath*, to perform their duty with inviolable honesty.'‡

In her subsequent total dereliction of this integrity, what a lesson does Rome hold out to *us*, to be careful not to lose the influences of a purer religion! To guard, especially, against the fatal effects of a needless multiplication of oaths, and the light mode in which they are too frequently administered! The citizens of Rome, in the days of the younger Cato, had no resource left against this pressing evil, because it was in vain to inculcate a reverence for *their* gods, and to revive the influence of *their* religion. But, if even the belief of false gods had the power of conveying political and moral benefits, which the dark system of atheism annihilated, how earnestly should we endeavour to remove and diffuse the ancient deference for the true religion, by teaching systematically and seriously, to our youth, the divine principles of that Christianity which, in better times, was the honourable practice of our forefathers, and which can alone restore a due veneration for the solemnity of oaths.§

* Nulla unquam respublica sanctior, nec bonis exemplis ditior fuit.

† See Montague on the Rise and Fall of ancient Republics.

‡ Hampton's Polybius, vol. ii. book 6. on the excellencies of the Roman government.

§ The admirable Hooker observes, that even the falsest religions were mixed with some truths, which had 'very notable effects.' Speaking of the dread of perjury in the ancient Romans, he adds, 'It was their hurt untruly to attribute so great power to false gods, as that they were able to prosecute, with fearful tokens of divine revenge, the wilful violation of oaths and execrable blasphemies, offered by deriders of religion even unto those false gods. Yet the right belief which they had, that to perjury vengeance is due, was not without good effect, as touching the course of their lives who feared the wilful violation of oaths.' Ecclesiastical Polity.

CHAP. IX

Characters of historians, who were concerned in the transactions which they record.

Of the modern writers of ancient history, the young reader will find that Rollin† has, in one respect, the decided superiority; we mean in his practice of intermixing useful reflections on events and characters. But, we should strongly recommend the perusal of such portions of the original ancient historians, as a judicious preceptor would select. And, in reading historians, or politicians, ancient or modern, the most likely way to escape theories and fables, is to study those writers who were themselves actors in the scenes which they record.

Among the principal of these is—Thucydides, whose opportunities of obtaining information, whose diligence in collecting it, and whose judgment and fidelity in recording it, have obtained for him the general suffrage of the best judges; who had a considerable share in many of the events which he records, having been an unfortunate, though meritorious commander in the Peloponnesian war, of which he is the incomparable historian;—whose chronological accuracy is derived from his early custom of preparing materials as the events arose; and whose genius confers as much honour, as his unmerited exile reflects disgrace, on his native Athens. In popular governments, and in none perhaps so much as in those of Greece, the ill effects or mismanagement at home have been too frequently charged on those who have had the conduct of armies abroad; and where a sacrifice must be made, that of the absent is always the most easy. The integrity and patriotism of Thucydides, however, were proof against the ingratitude of the republic. His work was as impartial as if Athens had been just; like Clarendon, he devoted the period of his banishment to the composition of a history, which was the glory of the country that banished him.—A model of candour, he wrote not for a party or a people, but for the world; not for the applause of his age, but the instruction of posterity. And though his energy, spirit, and variety must interest all readers of taste, statesmen will best know his value, and politicians will look up to him as a master.—Xenophon, the Attic bee, equally admirable in whatever point of view he is considered; a consummate general, historian, and philosopher; who carried on the historic series of the Greek revolutions from the period at which Thucydides discontinued it; like him was driven into banishment from that country, of which he was so bright an ornament,—

And with his exil'd hours enrich'd the world!

The conductor and narrator of a retreat more honourable and more celebrated than the victories of other leaders; a writer, who is considered by the first Roman critic, as the most exquisite model of simplicity and elegance; and who in almost all the transactions which he relates, *magna pars fuit*.—Polybius, trained to be a statesman in the Achæan league, and a warrior at the conquest of Carthage; the friend of Scipio, and the follower of Fabius; and who is said to be more experimentally acquainted with the wars and politics of which he treats, than any other Greek. He is however, more authentic than entertaining; and the votaries of certain modern historians, who are satisfied with an epigram instead of a fact, who like turns of wit better than sound political reflections, and prefer an antithesis to truth, will not justly appreciate the merit of Polybius, whose love of authenticity induced him to make several voyages to the places of which his subjects led him to speak. Cæsar, of whom it would be difficult to say, whether he planned his battles with more skill, fought them with more valour, or described them with more ability; or whether his sword or pen executed his purposes with more celerity and effect; but, who will be less interesting to the general reader, than to the statesman and soldier. His commentaries, indeed, will be perused with less advantage by the hereditary successor of the sovereign of a settled constitution, than by those who are struggling with the evils of civil commotion. Joinville, whose life of his great master, saint Louis, is written with the spirit of the ancient nobles, and the vivid earnestness of one, who saw with interest what he describes with fidelity; having been companion to the king in the expeditions which he records. Philippe de Comines, who possessed, by his personal concern in public affairs, all the avenues to the political and historical knowledge of his time, and whose memoirs will be admired while acute penetration, sound sense, and solid judgment survive. Davila, who learned the art of war under that great master, Henry the fourth of France, and whose history of the civil wars of that country furnishes a variety of valuable matter; who possesses the happy talent of giving interest to details, which would be dry in other hands; who brings before the eyes of the reader, every place which he describes, and every scene in which he was engaged; while his intimate knowledge of business, and of human nature, enables him to unveil with address, the mysteries of negotiation, and the subtleties of statesmen. This excellent work is disgraced by the most disgusting panegyrics on the execrable Catharine di Medici, an offence against truth and virtue, too glaring to be atoned for by any sense of personal obligation. In consequence of this partiality, he speaks of the massacre of saint Bartholomew, as slightly as if it had been a merely common act of necessary rigour on a few criminals; an *execution* being the cool term by which he describes that tremendous deed.* Guicciardin, a diplomatic historian, a lawyer, and a patriot; whose tedious orations and florid style cannot destroy the merit of his great work; the value of which is enhanced by the piety and probity of his own mind. Sully, the intrepid warrior, the able financier, the uncorrupt minister, who generally regulated the deep designs of the consummate statesman, by the inflexible

* The writer forbears to name living authors.

* Who can help regretting that the lustre of one of the most elegant works of antiquity, Quintilian's Institution of an Orator, should be in a similar manner tarnished by the most preposterous panegyrics on the emperor Domitian!

rules of religion and justice; whose memoirs should be read by ministers, to instruct them how to serve kings; and by kings, to teach them how to choose ministers. CARDINAL DE RETZ, who delineates with accuracy and spirit the principal actors in the wars of the Fronde, in which he himself had been a chief agent; who developes the dissimulation of courts, with the skilfulness of an adept in the arts which he unfolds, yet affecting, while he portrays the artifices of others, a simplicity, the very reverse of his real character; while his levity in writing retains so much of the licentiousness, and want of moral and religious principle of his former life, that he cannot be safely recommended to those whose principles of judgment and conduct are not fixed. Yet, his characters of the two famous cardinal prime ministers may be read with advantage by those, whose business leads them to such studies. The reader of de Retz will find frequent occasion to recognise the homage which even impiety and vice pay to religion and virtue, while the abundant corruptions of popery will call forth from every considerate protestant, devout sensations of gratitude to Heaven, for having delivered us from the tyranny of a system, so favourable to the production of the rankest abuses in the church, and the grossest superstition in the people. TEMPLE, the zealous negotiator of the triple alliance, and worthy, by his spirit and candour, to be the associate of De Wit in that great business which was transacted between them, with the liberal spirit, and honourable confidence of private friendship. His writings give the clearest insight into the period and events of which he treats; and his easy, though careless style, and well-bred manner, would come, almost more than any other, under the description of what may be called the *genteel*, did not his vanity a little break the charm. None, however, except his political writings, are meant to be recommended; his religious opinions being highly exceptionable and absurd. Yet it is but justice to add, that his unambitious temper, his fondness for private life, his enjoyment of its peace, and his taste for its pleasures, render his character interesting and amiable. The manners painting CLARENDON, the able chancellor, the exemplary minister, the inflexible patriot, who stemmed, almost singly, the torrent of vice, corruption, and venality; and who was not ashamed of being religious in a court which was ashamed of nothing else; whom the cabal hated for his integrity, and the court for his purity; a statesman who might have had statues erected to him in any other period but in that in which he lived; would have reformed most other governments But that to which he belonged, and been supported by almost any king but him whom he had the misfortune to serve. Clarendon, the faithful biographer of his own life; the majestic and dignified historian of the grand rebellion; whose periods sometimes want beauty, but never sense, though that sense is often wrapped up in an involution and perplexity which a little obscure it; whose style is weighty and significant, though somewhat retarded by the stateliness of its march, and encumbered with a redundancy of words. TOUCH, whose memoirs, though they may be thought to bear rather hard on the famous plenipotentiaries with whom he negotiated, and on the haughtiness of the allies who employed them, are written with much good sense, modesty, and temper. They present a striking reverse in the fortune of the imperious disturber of Europe, 'fallen from his high estate.' He who had been used to give his orders from the banks of the Po, the Danube, and the Tagus, is seen reduced to supplicate for peace, and to exchange the insolence of triumph for the hope of existence. Two Dutch burgomasters, haughtily imposing their own terms on a monarch who had before filled France with admiration, and Europe with alarm. This reverse must impress the mind of the reader, as it does that of the writer, with an affecting sense of that controlling Providence, which thus derides the madness of ambition, and the folly of worldly wisdom; that Providence which, in maintaining its character of being the abaser of the proud, produces, by means at first sight the most opposite, the accomplishment of its own purposes; and renders the unprincipled lust of dominion the instrument of its own humiliation. The difficulties of a negociator, who has to conclude an inglorious though indispensable treaty, are feelingly described, as well as the too natural, though hard fate of a minister, who is driven to such an unfortunate measure as that of being considered as the instrument of dishonour to his country. His pious recognition of God, as the supreme disposer of events, is worthy of great praise. The copious and fluent BURNET, whose diffuse, but interesting *history of his own times*, informs and pleases; though the loose texture of his slovenly narration would not now be tolerated in a newspaper; who saw a great deal, and wishes to have it thought that he saw every thing; whose egotism we forgive for the sake of his frankness, and whose minuteness, for the sake of his accuracy; who, if ever he exceeds, it is always on the side of liberty and toleration; an excess safe enough when the writer is soundly loyal, and unquestionably pious; and more especially safe when the reader is a prince. LADY RUSSEL, worthy of being the daughter of the virtuous Southampton; too fatally connected with the unhappy politics of the times; whose life was a practical illustration of her faith in the divine support, and of submission to the divine will; and whose letters, by their sound and sober piety, strong sense, and useful information, eclipse all those of her learned and distinguished correspondents.

CHAP. X.

Reflections on History—Ancient Historians.

IF, however, the historian be a compatriot, and especially if he be a contemporary, even though he was no actor in the drama, it is difficult for him not to range himself too uniformly on one side or the other. The human mind has a strong natural bias to adopt exclusive attachment. Perhaps man may be defined to be *an animal that delights in party*. Yet we are in-

clined to believe that an historian, though he may be partial and interested, yet if he be keen sighted and intelligent as to the facts of which he speaks, is, on the whole, a better witness than a more fair and candid, but worse informed man; because we may more easily calculate the degree of allowance to be made for partiality and prejudice, than we can estimate that which is to be made for defect of information. Of two evils, therefore, we should prefer a prejudiced, but well informed, to a more impartial, but less enlightened narrator.

When materials are fresh, they are more likely to be authentic; but, unfortunately, when it is more easy to obtain, it is often less safe to employ them. When the events are more remote, their authenticity is more difficult to ascertain; and, when they are near, the passions which they excite are more apt to warp the truth. Thus, what might be gained in accuracy by nearness of position, is liable to be lost in the partiality which that very position induces. The true point of vision is attained, when the eye and the object are placed at their due distance. The reader who comes to the perusal of the work, in a more unimpassioned frame than perhaps, the author wrote, will best collect the characters from the narrative, if fairly given.

Care should be taken not to extol shining characters in the gross, but to point out their weaknesses and errors; nor should the brilliant qualities of illustrious men be suffered to cast a veil over their vices, or so to fascinate the young reader, as to excite admiration of their very faults. Even in perusing *sacred history*, we should never extenuate, much less justify, the errors of great characters, but make them, at once, a ground for establishing the doctrine of general corruption, and for quickening our own vigilance. The weaknesses of the wisest, and the errors of the best, while they should be regarded with candour, must not be held up to imitation. It has been reasonably conjectured, that many acts of cruelty in Alexander, whose disposition was naturally merciful, were not a little owing to one of his preceptors having been early accustomed to call himself Phœnix, and his pupil Achilles; and thus to have habitually trained him to an imitation even of the vices of this ferocious hero.

A prince must not study history merely to store his memory with amusing narratives or insulated events, but with a view to trace the dependence of one event upon another. A common reader will be satisfied with knowing the exploits of Scipio or Hannibal, and will be sufficiently entertained with the description of the riches or beauty of such renowned cities as Carthage or Rome; but a prince (who is also a politician) studies history, in order to observe how ambition, operating on the breasts of two rival states, led to one war after another between these two states. By what steps the ruin of the one, and the triumph of the other, were hastened or delayed; by what indications the final catastrophe might have been antecedently known, or by what measures it might have been averted. He *is* interested not merely when a single event arises, but by the whole skill of the game; and he is on this account anxious to possess many inferior circumstances, serving to unite one event with another, which, to the ordinary reader, appear insignificant and dull. Again in the case of Pompey and Cæsar, the reflecting politician connects the triumphs of the latter with the political moral state of Rome. He bears in mind the luxurious habits of the patricians, who became the officers in Pompey's army; the gradual decay of public spirit, the licentiousness and venality of the capital, and the arts by which Cæsar had prepared his troops, while they were in Gaul, for the contention which he already meditated for the empire of the world. He will, in idea, see that world already vanquished, when he considers the profound policy of this conqueror, who on being appointed to the government of Gaul on both sides the Alps, by exciting the Gauls to solicit the same privileges with the Italians, opened to himself this double advantage:—the disturbance which this would occasion in Rome, would lift him into absolute power; while by his kindness and protection to these people, he gained an accession of strength to overthrow his competitor. The ordinary reader is satisfied with the battle of Pharsalia for the entertainment it affords, and admires the splendour of the triumphs, without considering these things as links that connect the events which are past with those which are to come.

The preceptor of the royal pupil will, probably, think it advisable to select for her perusal some of the lives of Plutarch. This author teaches two things excellently, antiquity and human nature. He would deserve admiration, were it only for that magazine of wisdom, condensed in the excellent sayings of so many great men, which he has recorded. Perhaps, all the historians together have not transmitted to us so many of the sage axioms and *bon mots* of ancient Greece and Rome. Yet, in his parallels—if that can be called a parallel which brings together two men who have commonly little or no resemblance, even the upright Plutarch exhibits something too much of the partiality lately noticed; the scale, whenever he weighs one of his own countrymen against a Roman, almost invariably inclining to the Greek side.

It may also be deemed useful to read to her a few select portions of Suetonius. Though he is an author utterly unfit to be put into youthful, and especially, into female hands, yet a judicious instructor may select passages particularly appropriated to a royal pupil. In truth, the writings of the ancient authors of all classes, historians, satirists, poets, and even moralists, are liable to the same objection, whether it be Suetonius, or Plutarch, or Juvenal, or even the comparatively decorous Virgil, that we take in hand; the perusal cannot fail to suggest to every considerate, and especially to every female reader, the obligations which we owe to Christianity, independently of its higher ends, for having so raised the standard of morals and of manners, as to have rendered almost too monstrous for belief, and too shocking for relation, in our days, the familiar and uncensured incidents of ancient time. Suetonius paints with uncommon force, though too often with offensive grossness, the crimes of the emperors, with their subsequent miseries and punishments. Tyrants will always

detest history, and, of all historians, they will detest Suetonius.

An authentic historian of a deceased tyrant must not, however, be confounded with the malevolent declaimer against royalty. But though the most arbitrary prince cannot prevent his own posthumous disgrace, yet an honest and conscientious historian will remember, that, while he is detailing the *vices* of a king, which it is his duty to enumerate, it is his duty also carefully to avoid bringing the *office* of the king into contempt. And, while he is exposing the individual *crime*, he should never lose sight of his respect for the *authority* and *station* of him whose actions truth compels him to record in their real characters. The contrary insidious practice has of late so much prevailed, that the young reader should be put on his guard not to suffer his principles to be undermined by the affectation of indignant virtue, mock patriotism, zeal for spurious liberty, and factitious morality. It is but justice to Mr. Hume, against whose principles we have thought it a duty to bear our most decided testimony,* to allow that in the earlier periods of English history, he carefully abstains from the vulgar error of always ascribing the public calamity, which he is relating, to the ambition or injustice of kings; but often attributes it, where it is often more justly due, to the insolence and oppression of the barons, or the turbulence and insubordination of the people. If he errs, it is on the contrary side.

But let those licentious anarchists, who delight to retail insipid jests, or to publish unqualified libels on kings *as* kings, cast their eyes on an uninterrupted succession of five illustrious Roman emperors, who, though not exempt from faults, some of them from vices, chiefly attributable to paganism, yet exhibit such an unbroken continuity of great talents and great qualities, as it would, perhaps, be difficult to find in any private family for five successive generations.

The candour of our excellent queen Mary,† towards the biographers of princes, was exemplary. When with an intention probably to sooth the royal ear, some persons in her presence, severely condemned certain historians who had made reflections dishonourable to the memory of princes, she observed that if the princes had given just ground for censure, the authors had done well to represent them fairly; and that other sovereigns must expect to be dealt with in the same manner, if they gave the same cause. She had even the magnanimity to wish, that all such princes would read Procopius, (an author too much addicted to blacken the memory of kings,) 'because,' she observed, 'however he might have exaggerated the vices he described, it would be a salutary lesson to future princes, that they themselves must expect the same treatment, when all restraint was taken off, and the dread of their power terminated with their lives.'

The late king of Prussia, who united the character of an author to that of a warrior, was of another way of thinking. He was of opinion, that the names of *good* princes alone should be recorded in history; and that those of the wicked should be suffered to perish with their crimes.* Were this practice to be universally adopted, might we not presume to question whether even the illustrious name of *Frederick the great* would be as certain, as it is at present, of being carried down to posterity?

Tacitus is the historian of philosophers, and the oracle of politicians. Highly valuable for his deep and acute reflections, in which neither the governors nor governed are spared; he is an original and profound thinker, and is admirable for the plenitude of his images, and the paucity of his words. His style is ardent, and his figures are bold. Vigour, brevity, and point, are its characteristics. He throws out a stronger likeness of a flagitious Roman in three words, than a diffuse writer would give in as many pages. In his annals he is a faithful, occasionally, indeed, a too faithful narrator; but he is also, at the same time, an honest and indignant reprover of the atrocious deeds which he records. In a man passionately loving liberty, virtue, and his country, we pardon, while painting the ruin of each, those dark and sullen shades with which he sometimes overcharges the picture. Had he delineated happier times, his tints would probably have been of a lighter cast. If he ever deceives, he does not, at least, ever appear to intend it; for he gives rumours as rumours, and his facts he generally grounds on the concurrent testimony of the times of which he writes. If, however Tacitus fulfils one of the two duties which he himself prescribes to historians, that of writing without *fear*, he does not uniformly accomplish the other, that of writing without *hatred;* at least neither his veracity nor his candour extended to his remarks on the Jews or Christians.

But, with all his diffuseness Livy is the writer who assists in forming the taste.—With all his warmth, there is a beautiful sobriety in his narrations; he does not magnify the action, he relates it, and pours forth, from a full urn, a copious and continued stream of varied elegance. He directs the judgment, by passing over slight things in a slight manner, and dwelling only on the prominent parts of his subject, though he has been accused of some important omissions. He keeps the attention always alive, by exhibiting passions as well as actions; and what best indicates the hand of a master, we hang suspended on the event of his narrative, as if it were a fiction, of which the catastrophe is in the power of the writer, rather than a real history, with whose termination we are already acquainted. He is admirable no less for his humanity than his patriotism; and he is one of the few historians, who have marked the broad line of discrimination between true and false glory, not erecting pomps, triumphs, and victories, into essentials of real greatness. He teaches patience under censure, inculcates a contempt

* In chap. xi † In chap. viii.

* *Examen du Prince de Machiavel by the king of Prussia.* It is curious to compare this composition of the king with his own conduct. To contrast his strong reprobation of the baneful glory of heroes, his horror of conquest, and of the cruel passions which oppress mankind; his professed admiration of clemency, meekness, justice, and compassion, with which this work abounds,—with the actual exploits of the ravager of the fertile plains of Saxony, &c. &c.!!

of vulgar acclamation, and of all praise which is not fairly earned. One valuable superiority, which Livy possesses over his competitors, is, that in describing vice, and vicious characters, he scrupulously contrives to excite an abhorrence of both; and his relations never leave on the mind of the reader, a propensity to the crime, or a partiality for the criminal whom he has been describing. A defect, in this acuteness of moral feeling, has been highly pernicious to the youthful reader; and this too common admixture of impure description, even when the honest design has been to expose vice, has sensibly tainted the wholesomeness of historic composition.

Independently of those beautiful, though sometimes redundant speeches, which Livy puts into the mouths of his heroes, his eloquent and finished answers to ambassadors, furnish a species of rhetoric peculiarly applicable to a royal education.

It has been regretted by some of the critics, that Livy, after enriching his own work by the most copious plagiarisms from his great precursor, Polybius, commends him in a way so frigid as almost to amount to censure. He does not, it is true, go the length of Voltaire in his treatment of Shakspeare, who first pillages and then abuses him. The Frenchman, indeed, who spoils what he steals, acts upon the old known principle of his country highwaymen, who always murder where they rob.

If it be thought that we have too warmly recommended heathen authors, let it be remembered, that in the hands of every enlightened preceptor, as was eminently the case with Fenelon, pagans almost become Christian teachers by the manner in which they will be explained, elucidated, purified; and not only will the corruptions of paganism be converted into instruction, by being contrasted with the opposite Christian graces, but the Christian system will be advantageously shown to be almost equally at variance, with many pagan virtues, as with all its vices.

If there were no other evidence of the value of pagan historians, the profound attention which they prove the ancients to have paid to the education of youth, would alone suffice to give them considerable weight in the eyes of every judge of sound instruction. Their regard to youthful modesty, the inculcation of obedience and reserve, the exercises of self-denial, exacted from children of the highest rank, put to shame,—I will not say Christians, but many of the nominal professors of Christianity.—Levity, idleness, disregard of the laws, contempt of established systems and national institutions, met with a severer reprobation in the pagan youth, than is always found among those, in our day, who yet do not openly renounce the character of Christians.

Far be it from us, however, to take our morals from so miserably defective a standard as pagan history affords. For though philosophy had given some admirable rules for maintaining the out-works of virtue, Christianity is the only religion which ever pretended to expel vice from the heart.—The best qualities of paganism want the best motives. Some of the overgrown Roman virtues, also, though they would have been valuable in their just measure and degree, and in a due symmetry and proportion with other virtues, yet, by their excess, helped to produce those evils which afterwards ruined Rome; while a perfect system of morals, like the Christian, would have prevented those evils. Their patriotism was oppression to the rest of the world. Their virtue was not so much sullied by pride, as founded in it; and their justice was tinctured with a savageness which bears little resemblance to the justice which is taught by Christianity.

These two simple precepts of our religion, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself*;—these two principles, kept in due exercise, would, like the two powers which govern the natural world, keep the intellectual and spiritual world in order; would restrain, impel, unite and govern it.

In considering the ancient philosophy, *how does the fine gold become dim*, before the sober lustre of that divine legislator, whose kingdom, indeed, was not of this world, but who has taught 'kings of the earth, princes, and all people,' those maxims and principles which cast into shade all the false splendours 'of the antique world!' Christianity has furnished the only true practical comment on that grand position of the admirable author of the sublime, that *nothing is great the contempt of which is great.* For how can triumphs, honours, riches, power, conquest, fame, be considered as of intrinsic value by a Christian, the very *essence* of whose religion consists in being crucified to the world; the very *aim and end* of whose religion lies in a superiority to all greatness which is to have an end with this life; the very *nature* and *genius* of whose religion tends to prove, that eternal life is the only adequate measure of the happiness, and immortal glory the only adequate object of the ambition of a Christian.

CHAP. XI.

English History.—Mr. Hume.

But the royal pupil is not to wander always in the wide field of universal history. The extent is so vast, and the time for travelling over it so short, that after being sufficiently possessed of that general view of mankind which the history of the world exhibits, it seems reasonable to concentrate her studies, and to direct her attention to certain great leading points, and especially to those objects with which she has a natural and more immediate connexion. The history of modern Europe abounds with such objects. In Robertson's luminous view of the state of Europe, the progress of society is traced with just arrangement and philosophical precision. His admirable histories of Charles V. and Mary Queen of Scots, separate from their great independent merit, will be read with singular advantage in connection with the contemporary reigns of English history. In the writings of Sully and Clarendon, may be seen how, for a long time, the passions of kings were contra-

dicted, and often controlled by the wisdom of their ministers; sovereigns who were not insensible to praise, nor averse from flattery, yet submitting, though sometimes with a very ill grace, to receive services rather than adulation. Ministers who consulted the good rather than the humour of their princes; who promoted their interests, instead of gratifying their vices, and who preferred their fame to their favour.

Mr. Hume.

Hume is incomparably the most informing, as well as the most elegant, of all the writers of English history. His narrative is full, well arranged, and beautifully perspicuous. Yet, he is an author who must be read with extreme caution on a political, but especially on a religious account. Though, on occasions where he may be trusted, because his peculiar principles do not interfere, his political reflections are usually just, sometimes profound. His account of the origin of the Gothic government is full of interest and information. He marks, with exact precision, the progress and decay of the feudal manners, when law and order began to prevail, and our constitution assumed something like a shape. His finely painted characters of Alfred and Elizabeth should be engraved on the heart of every sovereign. His political prejudices do not strikingly appear, till the establishment of the house of Stewart, nor his religious antipathies till about the distant dawn of the reformation under Henry V. From that period to its full establishment, he is perhaps more dangerous, because less ostensibly daring than some other infidel historians. It is a serpent under a bed of roses. He does not (in his *history* at least) so much ridicule religion himself, as invite others to ridicule it. There is in his manner, a sedateness which imposes; in his scepticism, a sly gravity which puts the reader more off his guard than the vehemence of censure, or the levity of wit; for we are always less disposed to suspect a man who is too wise to appear angry. That same wisdom makes him too correct to *invent* calumnies, but it does not preserve him from doing what is scarcely less disingenuous. He implicitly adopts the injurious relations of those annalists who were most hostile to the reformed faith; though he must have known their accounts to be aggravated and discoloured, if not absolutely invented. He thus makes others responsible for the worst things he asserts, and spreads the mischief, without avowing the malignity. When he speaks from himself, the sneer is so cool, the irony so sober, the contempt so discreet, the moderation so insidious, the difference between popish bigotry, and protestant firmness, between the fury of the persecutor and the resolution of the martyr, so little marked; the distinctions between intolerant frenzy and heroic zeal so melted into each other, and though he contrives to make the reader feel some indignation at the tyrant, he never leads him to feel any reverence for the sufferer; he ascribes such a slender superiority to one religious system above another, that the young reader who does not come to the perusal with his principles formed, will be in danger of thinking that the reformation was really not worth contending for.

But, in nothing is the skill of this accomplished sophist more apparent than in the artful way in which he piques his readers into a conformity with his own views concerning religion. Human pride, he knew, naturally likes to range itself on the side of ability. He therefore, skilfully works on this passion, by treating with a sort of contemptuous superiority, as weak and credulous men, all whom he represents as being under the religious delusion, and by uniformly insinuating that talents and piety belong to opposite parties.

To the shameful practice of confounding fanaticism with real religion, he adds the disingenuous habit of accounting for the best actions of the best men, by referring them to some low motive; and affects to confound the designs of the religious and the corrupt, so artfully, that no radical difference appears to subsist between them.

It is injurious to a young mind to read the history of the reformation by any author, how accurate soever he may be in his facts, who does not see a divine power accompanying this great work; by any author who ascribes to the power, or rather to the perverseness of nature, and the obstinacy of innovation, what was in reality an effect of providential direction; by any who discerns nothing but human resources, or stubborn perseverance, where a Christian distinguishes, though with a considerable alloy of human imperfection, the operation of the Spirit of God.

Hume has a fascinating manner at the close of the life of a hero, a prince, or a statesman, of drawing up his character so elaborately as to attract and fix the whole attention of the reader; and he does it in such a way, that while he engages the mind he unsuspectedly misleads it. He makes a general statement of the vices and virtues, the good and bad actions of the person whom he paints, leaving the reader to form his own conclusions, by casting up the balance of the vices and virtues, of the good and bad actions thus enumerated: while he never once leads the reader to determine on the character by the only sure criterion, the *ruling principle*, which seemed to govern it. This is the too prevailing method of historians; they make morals completely independent of religion, by thus weighing qualities, and letting the preponderance of the scale decide on virtue, as it were by grains and scruples: thus furnishing a standard of virtue subversive of that which Christianity establishes. This method instead of marking the moral distinctions, blends and confounds them, by establishing character on an accidental difference, often depending on circumstance and occasion, instead of applying to it one eternal rule and motive of action.*

But, there is another evil into which writers far more unexceptionable than Mr. Hume often

* If these remarks may be thought too severe by some readers for that degree of scepticism which appears in Mr. Hume's *history* may I not be allowed to observe that he has shown his principles so fully, in some of his other works, that we are entitled, on the ground of these works, to read with suspicion every thing he says which borders on religion?—A circumstance apt to be forgotten by many who read *only* his history.

fall, that of rarely leading the mind to look beyond second causes and human agents. It is mortifying to refer them to the example of a pagan. Livy thought it no disgrace to proclaim, repeatedly, the insufficiency of man to accomplish great objects without divine assistance. *He* was not ashamed to refer events to the direction and control of providence; and when he speaks of notorious criminals, he is not contented with describing them as transgressing against the state, but represents them as also offending against the gods.

Yet, it is proper again to notice the defects of ancient authors in their views of providential interference; a defect arising from their never clearly including a future state in their account. They seem to have conceived themselves as fairly *entitled* by their good conduct to the divine favour, which favour they usually limited to present prosperity. Whereas all notions of divine justice must of necessity be widely erroneous, in which a future retribution is not unambiguously and constantly included.

CHAP. XII.

Important æras of English History.

As the annals of our own country furnish an object on which a royal student should be led to dwell with particular interest, it may be necessary to call the attention to certain important periods of our history and constitution, from each of which we begin to reckon a new æra; because from that epoch, some new system of causes and effects begins to take place!

It will be proper, however, to trace the shades of alteration which intervene between these æras; for though the national changes appear to be brought about by some one great event, yet, the event itself will be found to have been slowly working its way by causes trivial in their appearance, and gradual in their progress. For the minds of the people must be previously ripened for a change, before any material alteration is produced—It was not the injury that Lucretia sustained, which kindled the resentment of the Romans; the previous misconduct of the Tarquins had excited in the people the spirit of that revolution. A momentary indignation brought a series of discontents to a crisis, and one public crime was seized on as the pretence for revenging a long course of oppression. The arrival, however, of these slowly produced æras makes a sudden and striking change in the circumstances of a country, and forms a kind of distinct line of separation between the manners which precede and those which follow it.

A prince (whose chief study must be politics) ought in general to prefer contemporary historians, and even ordinary annalists, to the compilers of history who come after them. He should have recourse to the documents from which authors derive their history, rather than sit down satisfied with the history so derived. Life, however, is too short to allow, in all cases, of this laborious process. Attention, therefore, to the minuter details of contemporary annalists, and to the original records consisting of letters and state papers, must be limited to periods of more than ordinary importance. Into these the attentive politician will dive for himself, and he will often be abundantly repaid. The periods, for example, of the unhappy contests in the reign of the first Charles, of the restoration, and more especially of the revolution, are the turning points of our political constitution. A prince, by examining these original documents, and by making himself master of the points then at issue, would be sure to understand what are his own rights as a sovereign.

It is not by single, but by concurrent testimony, that the truth of history is established. And it is by a careful perusal of different authors who treat of the same period, that a series of historic truth will be extracted. Where they agree, we may trust that they are right; where they differ we must elicit truth from the collision. Thus the royal pupil, when engaged in the perusal of Clarendon, should also study some of the best writers, who are favourable to the parliamentary cause. A careful perusal of Ludlow and Whitlock; a general survey of Rushworth, or occasional reference to that author and to Thurloe; and as a cursory review of their own *lives* and *times* by Laud and Baxter, will throw great light on many of the transactions of the eventful period of the first Charles. They will show how different the same actions appear to different men, equal in understanding and integrity. They will inforce mutual candour and mutual forbearance, repressing the wholesale conclusions of party violence, and teaching a prince to be on his guard against the intemperate counsels of his interested or heated advisers. They will instruct a monarch in the important lesson of endeavouring to ascertain and keep in view the light in which his actions and motives will appear to his people. They will teach him to attend carefully to the opinions and feelings, and even to the prejudices of the times; and in obedience to a precept enjoined by divine authority for private life, and still more important to be observed in public,—'to provide things honest in the sight of all men.'

Again, while the narratives of the contemporary historians furnish facts, they who live in a succeeding age have the additional advantages first, of a chance of greater impartiality; secondly, of a comparison with corresponding events, and, thirdly, of having the tendencies of the events related, appreciated by the evidence of their actual effects. How imperfect, for example, would be the philosophical and political remarks, and how false the whole colour belonging to any history of the French revolution which might have immediately appeared.* Much lapse of time is necessary in order to reflect back light on the original tendency of events. The fermentation of political passions requires a long time to subside. The agitation continues till the events have nearly lost their

* The French revolution, with its consequences, seem intended practically to contradict what Thucydides declared to be his design in writing history; namely, by a faithful account of past things to assist mankind in conjecturing the future!

interest, by the occurrence of a fresh class of events; which, in their turn, raise a new party, and excite a new interest; so that an impartial distribution of praise and censure is seldom made till those who are concerned in it have been long out of hearing. And it is an inconvenience inseparable from human things that when writers are least able to come at the truth, they are most disposed to tell it.

It will be necessary to understand the political system of Europe, since that period particularly, when the two powers of France and Austria having arisen to a greatness, which made them mutually, as well as generally formidable, other countries, seeing the necessity for their own safety, of opposing the stronger, and supporting the weaker, conceived the idea of that balance of power, that just equiponderance, which might preserve the security of all.

But there is a far earlier epoch to which attention ought perhaps, in the very first instance, to be directed, I mean the reign of Alfred. This is eminently a study for kings.—In Alfred, the most vigorous exertion of public justice was united with attachment to public liberty. He eagerly seized every interval of tranquillity, from the convulsions with which the state was torn, to collect materials for the most salutary institutions, which he afterwards established; he employed every moment he could snatch from the wars in which he was inevitably engaged, in introducing the arts of peace, and in turning the minds of his harassed and disorderly subjects to virtuous and industrious pursuits; in repairing the mischievous consequences of past insurrections, and wisely guarding against their return. He had to correct the habits of a people who had lived without laws, and without morals; and to reduce to civilization, men who had been driven to subsist by chance or rapine. By a system of jurisprudence, which united moral discipline with the execution of penal laws, he undertook to give a new direction to habits inveterately depraved.

The royal pupil will be taught to ascribe the origin of some of our best usages to these sagacious regulations; above all, the conception of that unparalleled idea which so beautifully reconciles the exact administration of justice with individual liberty; the origin of our juries evidently appearing to have first entered the mind of Alfred. The effects on the people seem to have been proportioned to the exertions of the prince. Crimes were repressed. The most unexampled change took place in the national manners. Encouragement was held out to the reformed, while punishment kept in order the more irreclaimable. Yet with all these strong measures, never was a prince more tenderly alive to the liberty of the subject. And while commerce, navigation, ingenious inventions, and all the peaceful arts were promoted by him, his skill in the military tactics of that day was superior, perhaps, to that of any of his contemporaries.

To form such vast projects, not for disturbing the world, but for blessing it,—to reduce those projects, in many instances, to the most minute detail of actual execution;—to have surmounted the misfortune of a neglected education so as to make himself a scholar, a philosopher, and the moral as well as civil instructor of his people;—all this implies such a grandeur of capacity, such an exact conception of the true character of a sovereign, such sublimity of principle, and such corresponding rectitude of practice, as fill up all our ideas of consummate greatness. In a word, Alfred seems to have been sent into the world to realize the beautiful fiction, which poets, philosophers, and patriots, have formed of a perfect king. It is also worth observing, that all those various plans were both projected and executed by a monarch who, as all historians agree, had suffered more hardships than any ordinary adventurer, had fought more battles than most generals, and was the most voluminous author of his day.* And, if it should be asked by what means a single individual could accomplish such a variety of projects, the answer is simply this: It was in a good measure by an art of which little account is made, but which is perhaps of more importance in a sovereign than almost any other, at least it is one without which the brightest genius is of little value, *a strict œconomy of time.*

Between the earlier life of Alfred and that of Charles II. there was, as must be observed, a striking similarity. The paths of both to the throne were equally marked by such imminent dangers and 'hair breadth's 'scapes' as more resemble romance than authentic history. What a lesson had Alfred prepared for Charles! But their characters as kings, exhibited an opposition which is as strong as the resemblance in their previous fortunes. With an understanding naturally good, with that education which Alfred wanted,—with every advantage which an improved state of society could give over a barbarous one; such, notwithstanding, was the uniform tenor of the Stuart's subsequent life, as almost to present the idea of an intended contrast to the virtues of the illustrious Saxon.

Another epoch to which the pupil's attention should be pointed, is the turbulent and iniquitous reign of king John; whose oppression and injustice were, by the excess to which they were carried, the providential means of rousing the English spirit, and of obtaining the establishment of the great charter. This famous transaction, so deservedly interesting to Englishmen, bestowed or secured the most valuable civil privileges; chiefly indeed to the barons and clergy, but also to the people at large. The privileges of the latter had antecedently, been scarcely taken into the account, and their liberties, always imperfect, had suffered much infringement by the introduction of the feudal law into England under the Norman William. For, whether they were vassals under the barons, or vassals under the king it made little difference in their condition; which was, in fact, to the greater part, little better than a state of absolute slavery. The barons, liberal, perhaps, through policy rather than humanity, in struggling for their own liberty were compelled to involve in one common interest the liberty of the people; and the same laws which they

* See the character of Alfred in Hume, from which the preceding part of this account, in substance, is chiefly taken.

demanded to secure their own protection, in some measure necessarily extended their benign influence to the inferior classes of society —Those immunities, which are essential to the well-being of civil and social life, gradually became better secured. Injustice was restrained, tyrannical exactions were guarded against, and oppression was no longer sanctioned. This famous deed, without any violent innovation, became the mound of property, the pledge of liberty, and the guarantee of independence. As it guarded the rights of all orders of men, from the lowest to the highest, it was vigorously contended for by all; for, if it limited the power of the king, it also confirmed it, by securing the allegiance and fidelity of the subject. It was of inestimable use by giving a determinate form and shape, 'such a local habitation and a name,' to the spirit of liberty; so that the English, when, as it often happened, they claimed the recognition of their legal rights, were not left to wander in a wide field, without having any specific object, without limitation, and without direction. *They knew what to ask for*, and, obtaining that, they were satisfied. *We* surely cannot but be sensible of the advantages which they derived from this circumstance, who have seen the effects of an opposite situation, in this very particular, illustrated so strikingly in the earlier period of the French revolution.

But, rapidity of progress seems, by the very laws of nature, to be precluded, where the benefit is to be radical and permanent.—It was not, therefore, until our passion for making war within the territory of France was cured, nor until we left off tearing the bowels of our own country, in the dissensions of the Yorkists and Lancastrians, after having for near four hundred years, torn those of our neighbours; in a word, it was not until both foreign and civil fury began to cool, that in the reign of Henry VII. the people began to enjoy more real freedom, as the king enjoyed a more settled dominion, and the interests of peace and commerce substantially prevailed. Without ascribing to this king virtues which he did not possess, the view of his reign, with all its faults, affords a kind of breathing time, and sense of repose. It is from this reign that the history of the laws, and civil constitution of England become interesting; as that of our ecclesiastical constitution does from the subsequent reign. A general acquaintance with the antecedent part of our history may suffice for the royal pupil, but from these periods she cannot possess too detailed a knowledge of it.

CHAP. XII.

Queen Elizabeth.

It is remarkable that in France, a nation in which women have always been held in the highest consideration, their genius has never been called to its loftiest exercise.—France is perhaps the only country which has never been governed by a woman.—The mothers, however, of some of her sovereigns, when minors, have, during their regencies, Blanche of Castile,* especially, discovered talents for government not inferior to those of most of her kings.

Anne of Austria has had her eulogists; but in her character there seems to have been more of intrigue than of genius, or at least, than of sound sense; and her virtues were problematical. If her talents had some splendour, they had no solidity. They produced a kind of stage effect, which was imposing, but not efficient, and she was rather an actress of royalty than a great queen. She was not happy in the choice of a friend. The source of all Mazarin's greatness, she supported him with inflexible attachment, and established him in more than regal power. In return, he treated her with respect as long as he stood in need of her protection, and set her aside when her support was become no longer necessary to his confirmed power.

The best queens have been most remarkable for employing great men. Among these, Zenobia, Elizabeth, and Anne stood foremost. Those who wish to derogate from the glories of a female reign, have never failed to urge, that they were owing to the wisdom of the ministers, and not to that of the queen; a censure which involves an eulogium. For, is not the choice of sagacious ministers the characteristic mark of a sagacious sovereign? Would, for instance, Mary di Medici have chosen a Walsingham; she who made it one of the first acts of her regency to banish Sully, and to employ Concini? Or, did it ever enter into the mind of the first Mary of England to take into her councils that Cecil, who so much distinguished himself in the cabinet of her sister?

Elizabeth's great natural capacity was, as has been before observed, improved by an excellent education. Her native vigour of mind had been early called forth by a series of uncommon trials. The circumspection she had been, from childhood, obliged to exercise, taught her prudence. The difficulties which beset her, accustomed her to self-control. Can we, therefore, doubt that the steadiness of purpose, and undaunted resolution which she manifested on almost every occasion during her long reign, were greatly to be attributed to that youthful discipline? She would probably never have acquired such an ascendency over the mind of others, had she not early learned so absolute a command over her own.

On coming to the crown, she found herself surrounded with those obstacles which display great characters, but overset ordinary minds. The vast work of the reformation, which had been undertaken by her brother Edward, but crushed in the very birth, as far as was within human power, by the bigot Mary, was resumed and accomplished by Elizabeth: and that, not in the calm of security, not in the fulness of undisputed power, but even while that power was far from being confirmed, and that security was liable, every moment, to be shaken by the most alarming commotions. She had prejudices, apparently insurmountable, to overcome; she had heavy debts to discharge; she had an almost ruined navy to repair; she had a debased coin

* Mother of Louis IX.

to restore; she had empty magazines to fill; she had a decaying commerce to invigorate; she had an exhausted exchequer to replenish.—All these, by the blessing of God on the strength of her mind, and the wisdom of her councils, she accomplished. She not only paid her own debts; but, without any great additional burdens on her subjects, she discharged those also which were due to the people from her two immediate predecessors. At the same time, she fostered genius, she encouraged literature, she attracted all the great talents of the age within the sphere of her own activity. And, though she constantly availed herself of all the judgment and talents of her ministers, her acquiescence in their measures was that of conviction, never of implicit confidence.

Her exact frugality may not, by superficial judges, be reckoned among the shining parts of her character. Yet, those who see more deeply, must allow, that it was a quality from which the most important benefits were derived to her people; and without which all her great abilities would have been comparatively inefficient. The parsimony of her grandfather was the rapine and exaction of an extortioner; hers, the wise economy of a provident parent. If we are to judge of the value of actions by their consequences, let us compare the effects upon the country, of the prodigality, both of her father, and of her successor, with her own frugality. As it has been asserted by Plutarch,* that the money idly thrown away by the Athenians on the representations of two dramatic poets only, amounted to a larger sum than had been expended on all their wars against the Persians, in defence of their liberty; so it has been affirmed, that the first James spent more treasure on his favourites, than it had cost Elizabeth to maintain all her wars. Yet, there have not been wanting historians, who have given the praise of liberality to James, and especially to Henry, while Elizabeth has suffered the imputation of avarice. But we ought to judge of good and evil, by their own weight and measure, and not by the specious names which the latter can assume, nor by the injurious terms which may be bestowed on the former.

It is not from the splenetic critic in retired life, from the declaimer, ignorant of the duties and the requisitions of princes, that we should take our sentiments on the point of royal economy; but from men, who, however possessing different characters and views, yet agree in this one respect, that their exalted public situations, and great personal experience enable them to give a fair and sound opinion. The judgment even of the emperor Tiberius was not so impaired by his vices, but that he could insist, that an exchequer, exhausted by prodigality, must be replenished with oppression. Cicero, versed in public business, no less than in the knowledge of mankind, affirms, that 'a liberal prince loses more hearts than he gains, and that the resentment of those from whom he takes the money, is much stronger than the gratitude of those to whom he gives it.' And, on another occasion he says, that 'men are not aware what a rich treasury frugality is.' The same sentiments seem to have been adopted by another Roman statesman, a royal favourite too. Pliny affirms, that 'a prince will be pardoned, who gives nothing to his subjects, provided he takes nothing away from them.'

Those princes, who despising frugality, have been prodigal for the sake of a little temporary applause, have seldom achieved lasting good. And, allowing that this lavish generosity may be for the moment a popular quality, yet, there is scarcely any thing which has contributed to bring more calamities on a state, than the means used for enabling the prince to indulge it. It was not in Rome alone, as recent instances testify, that when the government has wanted money, the rich have been always found to be the guilty. A prodigal generosity, as we have seen in the case of Cæsar, and in our own time, may be a useful instrument for paving the way to a throne; but an established sovereign will find economy a more certain means of keeping him in it. The emperor Nero was extolled for the felicity which he was diffusing by his bounty, while Rome was groaning under the burthen of his exactions. That liberality which would make a prince necessitous, and a people poor, would, by hurting his fame, weaken his influence; for reputation is power. After all, such a care and improvement of the revenue, as will enable him to spare his subjects, is the truest liberality in a prince.

But, to return—The distinguishing qualities of Elizabeth appear to have been economy, prudence, and moderation. Yet in some instances the former was rigid, not to say unjust.* Nor had her frugality always the purest motives. She was, it is true, very unwilling to trouble parliament for money, for which, indeed, they were extremely unwilling to be troubled; but her desire to keep herself independent of them seems to have been her motive for this forbearance. What she might have gained in supplies she must have lost in power.

To her moderation and that middle line of conduct which she observed, much of her success may be ascribed. To her moderation in the contests between papists and puritans, it is chiefly to be attributed, that the reformation issued in a happier medium in England, than in any other country.—To her moderation, in respect to foreign war, from which she was singularly averse, may be ascribed at that rapid improvement at home, which took place under her reign.—If we were to estimate Elizabeth as a private female, she would doubtless appear entitled to but little veneration. If as an instrument raised up by Divine Providence to carry through the most arduous enterprises in the most difficult emergencies, we can hardly rate her too highly. We owe her much as Englishmen. As protestants, what do we not owe her? If we look at the woman, we shall see much to blame; if at the sovereign, we shall see almost every thing to admire.—Her great, faults though they derogated from her personal character, seldom deeply affected her administration. In one instance only, her favouritism was prejudicial

* In his inquiry whether the Athenians were more eminent in the arts of war or peace.

* Particularly her keeping the see of Ely vacant nineteen years, in order to retain the revenue.

to the state; her appointment of Leicester to the naval command, for which he was utterly unfit. On many occasions, as we have elsewhere observed, her very passions supplied what was wanting in principle. Thus, her violent attachments might have made her indiscriminately lavish, if they had not been counteracted by that parsimoniousness which never forsook her. Accordingly, in the midst of her lamentations for the death of Leicester, we see her grief did not make her forget to seize his goods, and to repay herself for what she had lent him.

Our censures, therefore, must not be lost in our admiration, nor must our gratitude warp our judgment. And it may be useful to inquire how it came to pass that Elizabeth, with so much power, so much prudence, and so much popularity, should at length become completely miserable, and die, neglected and forsaken, her sun setting ingloriously after so bright a day of prosperity and honour.

May we not venture to attribute it to the defectiveness, not to say unsoundness, of her moral principles? Though corrupt principles for a certain period may conceal themselves, and even dazzle, by the success of the projects to which, in the view of superficial reasoners, they may have appeared conducive; they will, in a long course of action, betray their intrinsic weakness. —They may not entirely have prevented the public good effects of other useful qualities with which they were associated; but they do most fatally operate against the personal honour of the individual; and against her reaping that harvest of gratitude and respect, to which she might otherwise have been so justly entitled.

Vanity was, too probably, the spring of some of Elizabeth's most admired actions; but the same vanity also produced that jealousy, which terminated in the death of Mary. It was the same vanity which led her first to court the admiration of Essex, and then to suffer him to fall a victim to her wounded pride. Her temper was uncontrolled.—While we pardon her ignorance of the principles of liberty, we should not forget how little she respected the privileges of parliament, claiming a right of imprisoning its very members, without deigning to give any account of her proceedings.

Policy was her favourite science, but in that day a liberal policy was not understood; and Elizabeth was too apt to substitute both simulation and dissimulation for an open and generous conduct. This dissimulation at length lost her the confidence of her subjects, and while it inspired her with a distrust, it also forfeited the attachment of her friends. Her insincerity, as was natural, infected those around her. The young Cecil himself was so far alienated from his royal mistress, and tainted with the prevailing spirit of intrigue, as to be secretly corresponding with her rival James.

That such mortifying occurrences were too likely to arise, from the very nature of existing circumstances, where the dying prince was the last of her race, and the nearly vacant throne about to be possessed by a stranger, must assuredly be allowed. But it may still be asserted, that nothing but deficiency of moral character could have so desolated the closing scene of an illustrious princess. Real virtue will, in every rank, draw upon it disinterested regard; and a truly virtuous sovereign will not be shut out from a more than ordinary share in this general blessing. It is honourable to human nature to see the dying William pressing to his bosom the hand of Bentick; but it will be still more consolatory as well as instructive to compare, with the forsaken death-bed of Elizabeth, the exemplary closing scence of the second Mary as described by Burnet, an eye-witness of the affecting event which he relates.

CHAP. XIV.

Moral advantages to be derived from the study of history, independent of the examples it exhibits.—History proves the corruption of human nature.—It demonstrates the superintending power of Providence—illustrated by instances.

The knowledge of great events and splendid characters, and even of the customs, laws, and manners of different nations; an acquaintance, however accurate, with the state of the arts, sciences, and commerce of those nations, important as is this knowledge, must not however be considered as of primary importance in the study of history.—There are still higher uses to which that study may be turned. History furnishes a strong practical illustration of one of the fundamental doctrines of our religion, the corruption of human nature. To this truth it constantly bears witness by exemplifying it under every shape and shade, and colour, and gradation; the annals of the world, indeed, from its commencement to the present hour, presenting little else than a strongly interwoven tissue of those corruptions, and their attendant calamities.

History every where proves the helplessness and natural inability of man, the insufficiency of all such moral principles as can be derived from nature and experience; the necessity of explicit instruction respecting our true happiness, and of divinely communicated strength in order to its attainment; and consequently, the inconceivable worth of that life and immortality, which are so fully brought to light by the gospel.

That reader looks to little purpose over the eventful page of history, who does not accustom himself to mark therein the finger of the Almighty, governing kings and kingdoms; prolonging or contracting the duration of empires; tracing out beforehand, in the unimpeachable page of the prophet Daniel,* an outline of successive empires, which subsequent events have

* The parts of the book of Daniel chiefly alluded to are Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation of it, in the second chapter; and his own vision of the four beasts, in the eighth. These two passages alone, preserved as they have been by the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, amount to an irrefragible demonstration that our religion is divine. One of the most ancient and most learned opposers of revelation is said to have denied the possibility of these prophecies having existed before the events. But we know they *did* exist, and no modern infidel *dares* to dispute it.—But, admitting this, however they may take refuge in their own inconsequence of mind, they inevitably, though indirectly, allow the truth of Christianity.

realized with the most critical exactness; and describing their eventful subservience to the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, with a circumstantial accuracy which the well-informed Christian, who is versed in scripture language, and whose heart is interested in the subject, reads with unutterable and never-ceasing astonishment. It is, in fact, this wonderful correspondence, which gives its highest value to the more ancient half of the historic series. What would it profit us, at this day, to learn from Xenophon, that the Assyrian monarch had subjugated all those countries, with the exception of Media, which spread eastward from the Mediterranean, if it were not that, by this statement, he confirms that important portion of sacred and prophetic history! And to what solidly useful purpose would the same historian's detail of the taking of Babylon be applicable, if it did not forcibly as well as minutely, illustrate the almost equally detailed denunciations of the prophet Isaiah? It was partly for the purpose of elucidating this correspondence between sacred prophecy and ancient history; and showing, by how regular a providential chain the successive empires of the ancient world were connected with each other, and ultimately with Christianity, that the excellent Rollin composed his well-known work; and the impression which his researches left upon his own mind, may be seen in those sublimely pious remarks with which his last volume is concluded.

A careful perusal of the historical and prophetical parts of scripture will prepare us for reading profane history with great advantage. In the former we are admitted within the veil. We are informed how the vices of nations drew down on them the wrath of the Almighty; and how some neighbouring potentate was employed as the instrument of divine vengeance. How his ambition, his courage, and military skill were but the means of fulfilling the divine prediction, or of inflicting the divine punishment. How, when the mighty conqueror, the executioner of the sentence of Heaven, had performed his assigned task, he was put aside, and was himself, perhaps in his turn, humbled and laid low. Such are the familiar incidents of historic and prophetic Scripture. But, in addition to the stock of knowledge which we received from thence, we shall have learned in the divine school to little purpose, if we do not find the benefit of our studies in the general impression and habits of mind which we derive from them; if we do not open our eyes to the agency of Providence in the varying fortunes of nations, and in the talents, characters, and fates of the chief actors in the great drama of life.

Do we read in the prophetic page the solemn call and designations of Cyrus?—Let us learn to recognise no less, as the instrument of the Almighty, a Gustavus, and a Marlborough! Are we many hundred years before informed, by Him who can alone see the end from the beginning, of the military exploits of the conqueror of Babylon, and the overturner of the Assyrian empire?—Let us learn to refer no less to that same all-disposing power, the victories of Lutzen and of Blenheim, the humiliation of Austrian arrogance, and of French ambition.

Another important end to the study of general history, distinct from that which has just been mentioned, but by no means unconnected with it, is the contemplation of divine wisdom and goodness, as exercised in gradually civilizing the human race, through the instrumentality of their own agitation. In this view the mind of the pupil should be particularly led to observe that mysterious yet most obvious operation of Providence, by which, through successive ages, the complicated chaos of human agency has been so over-ruled as to make all things work together for general good: the hostile collision of nations being often made conducive, almost in its immediate consequences, to their common benefit, and often rendered subservient to the general improvement, and progressive advancement of the great commonwealth of mankind.

If this view, respecting the world at large, should be deemed too vast for satisfactory consideration, it may be limited to that part with which we are most nearly connected; and to which it is hardly too bold to say, that Divine Providence itself has, during the latter ages of the world, seemed to direct its chief attention—I mean the continent of Europe. Let it simply be asked, what was the state of this continent two thousand years ago? The answer must be —from the Alps to the Frozen Ocean, a moral as well as physical wilderness. That the human powers were formed for extended exercise, and in some sense for boundless improvement, the very contemplation of those powers is sufficient to evince. But that improvement had not then begun, nor was the frost of their dreariest winter more benumbing than that in which their minds had been for ages locked up. To what then but a regular design of Providence can we attribute the amazing change! And it is doubtless the part, no less of religious gratitude than of philosophical curiosity, to inquire into the series of instrumental causes by which the transformation was effected. This interesting and most instructive intelligence is conveyed to us by history. We mark the slow but steady developement of the wise and benevolent plan. We see the ambition of Rome breaking up the soil with its resistless plough-share, and scattering even through these British isles the first seeds of civilization. We see the northern invaders burst forth with irresistible violence, bringing back, to all human appearance, the former desolation; but, in reality, conducing, though with an operation like that of lava from a volcano, to a richer harvest of social and civil happiness. We see all that was really valuable spring up again afresh, mingled with new principles of utility and comfort; and above all, quickened and enriched by the wide-spread influences of a pure and heavenly religion. We see the violent passions providentially let loose, when it was necessary for society to be roused from a pernicious torpor. We see an enthusiastic rage for conquests in Asia, inducing an activity of mind, and enlargement of view, out of which eventually grew commerce, liberty, literature, philosophy, and at length, even religious reformation. In brief, if in our perusal of history, we take true wisdom for our guide, we shall not only be instructed by that gracious progressiveness

which is discernable in past events, but, notwithstanding the awful concussions of the present period, we shall learn to trust Almighty wisdom and goodness for what is to come. And we shall be ready to indulge the hope of a yet greatly increased happiness of mankind, when we consider, that the hand which brought us from barbarism to our present circumstances is still over us;—that progression to still better habits is equally possible, and equally necessary; and that no means were rendered more conducive to such progress, in the period which is passed, than the agitations of the same awful and afflictive kind which we are now doomed to contemplate.

It will be seen that the same Infinite wisdom often permits human evils to balance each other, and in subservience to his grand purpose of general good, not only sets good against evil, but often, where the counteracting principle of religion seems wholly suspended, prevent any fatal preponderance in the scale of human affairs, by allowing one set of vices to counterbalance another.—Thus, societies, which appear, on a general view, to have almost wholly thrown off the divine government, are still preserved for better things, or perhaps, for the sake of the righteous few, who still remain in them, by means of those exertions which bad men make from selfish motives; or by the vigilance with which one party of bad men watches over another. The clash of parties, and the opposition of human opinion, are likewise often overruled for good. The compages of the public mind, if we may use such a term, are no less kept together, than the component parts of matter, by opposite tendencies. And, as all human agents are nothing but the instruments of God, he can with equal efficacy, though doubtless not with the same complacency, cause the effects of evil passions to be counteracted by each other, as well as by the opposite virtues. For instance, were it not for indolence and the dread of difficulty and danger, ambition would deluge the world in blood. The love of praise, and the love of indulgence, assist, through their mutual opposition, to keep each other in order. Avarice and voluptuousness are almost as hostile to each other, as either is to the opposite virtues; therefore, by pulling different ways, they contribute to keep the world in equipoise. Thus, the same divine hand, which had so adjusted the parts and the properties of matter, as that their apparent opposition produces, not disruption, but harmony, and promotes the general order, has also conceived, through the action and counteraction of the human mind, that no jar of passion, no abuse of free agency, shall eventually defeat the wise and gracious purposes of heaven.

For an illustration of these remarks, we scarcely need go farther than the character of our own heroic Elizabeth. Her passions were naturally of the strongest kind; and it must be acknowledged, that they were not always under the controul of principle. To what then can we so fairly ascribe the success which, even in such instances, attended her, as the effect of one strong passion forcibly operating on another? Inclinations which were too violent to be checked by reason were met and counteracted by opposite inclinations of equal violence; and through the direction of Providence, the passion finally predominant was generally favourable to the public good.

Do we then mean to admit, that the Almighty approves of these excesses in individuals, by which his wisdom often works for the general benefit? God forbid. Nothing surely could be less approved by him, than the licentiousness and cruelty of our eighth Henry, though He over-ruled those enormities for the advantages of the community, and employed them, as his instruments for restoring good government, and for introducing, and at length establishing, the reformation. England enjoys the inestimable blessing but the monarch is not the less responsible personally for his crimes. We are equally certain, that God did not approve of the insatiable ambition of Alexander, or of his incredible acquisition of territory by means of unjust wars. Yet, from that ambition, those wars, and those conquests, how much may the condition of mankind have been meliorated? The natural humanity of this hero, which he had improved by the study of philosophy under one of the greatest masters in the world, disposed him to turn his conquests to the benefit of mankind. He founded seventy cities, says his historian, so situated as to promote commerce and diffuse civilization. Plutarch* observes, that had those nations not been conquered, Egypt would have had no Alexandria, Mesopotamia, no Selucia. He also informs us, that Alexander introduced marriage into one conquered country, and agriculture into another; that one barbarous nation, who used to eat their parents, was led by him to reverence and maintain them; that he taught the Persians to respect, and not to marry their mothers; the Scythians to bury, and not to eat their dead.

There was on the whole, something so extraordinary in the career of this monarch, and in the results to which it led, that his historian Arrian, amidst all the darkness of paganism, was induced to say, that Alexander seemed to have been given to the world by a peculiar dispensation of Providence.

Did the same just Providence, approve of the usurpation of Augustus over his fallen country?—No—but Providence employed it as the means of restoring peace to remote provinces, which the tyrannical republic had so long harassed and oppressed; and also of establishing a general uniformity of law, and facility of intercourse between nation and nation, which were signally subservient to the diffusion of that divine religion, which was so soon to enlighten and to bless mankind.

To adduce one or two instances more, were thousands might be adduced—Did the Almighty approve those frantic wars which arrogated to themselves the name of *holy*? Yet, with all the extravagance of the enterprise, and the ruinous failure which attended its execution, many beneficial consequences, as has been already intimated, were permitted, incidentally, to grow out of them. The Crusaders, as their historians demonstrate,† beheld in their march, countries

* Quoted by Gillies vol. iii. p. 385.

† See especially Robertson's State of Europe

in which civilization had made a greater progress than in their own. They saw foreign manufactures in a state of improvement to which they had not been accustomed at home. They perceived remains of knowledge in the East, of which Europe had almost lost sight. Their native prejudices were diminished in witnessing improvements to which the state of their own country presented comparative barbarity. The first faint gleam of light dawned on them, the first perceptions of taste and elegance were awakened, and the first rudiments of many an art were communicated to them by this personal acquaintance with more polished countries. Their views of commerce were improved, and their means of extending it were enlarged.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that the excess to which the popes carried their usurpation, and the Romish clergy, their corruptions, was, by the Providence of God, the immediate cause of the reformation. The taking of Constantinople by the Turks, though in itself, a most deplorable scene of crimes and calamities, became the occasion of most important benefits to our countries, by compelling the only accomplished scholars then in the world to seek an asylum in the western part of Europe. To these countries they carried with them the Greek language, which ere long proved one of the providential means of introducing the most important event that has occurred since the first establishment of Christianity.

May we not *now* add to the number of instances in which Providence has over-ruled the crimes of men for good, a recent exemplification of the doctrine, in the ambition of that person, who, by his unjust assumption of imperial power in a neighbouring nation, has, though unintentionally, almost annihilated the wild outcry of false liberty, and the clamour of mad democracy?

All those contingent events which lie without the limits and calculations of human foresight; all those variable loose uncertainties which men call chance, has God taken under his own certain disposal and absolute controul. To reduce uncertainty to method, confusion to arrangement, and contingency to order, is solely the prerogative of Almighty power.

Nothing can be further from the intention of these remarks, than to countenance, in the slightest degree, the doctrine of optimism in the sense in which it was maintained by Mr. Pope. Far be it from the writer, to intimate that the good which has thus providentially been produced out of evil, is greater than the good, which would have been produced had no such evil been committed; or to insinuate, that the crimes of men do not diminish the quantity of good which is enjoyed. This would, indeed, be to furnish an apology for vice. That God *can* and *does* bring good out of evil, is unquestionably true; but to affirm, that he brings more, or so much good out of evil as he would have brought out of good, had good been practised, would be indeed a dangerous position.

If, therefore, God often 'educes good from ill,' yet man has no right to count upon his always doing it in the same degree in which he appoints that good shall be productive of good. To resume the illustration, therefore, from a few of the instances already adduced; what an extensive blessing might Alexander, had he acted with other views and to other ends, have proved to that world, whose happiness he impaired by his ambition, and whose morals he corrupted by his example! How much more effectually, and immediately might the reformation have been promoted, had Henry, laying aside the blindness of prejudice, and subduing the turbulence of passion, been the zealous and consistent supporter of the protestant cause; the virtuous husband of one virtuous wife, and the parent of children *all* educated in the sound principles of the reformation? Again, had the popes effectually reformed themselves, how might the unity of the churches have been promoted: and even the schisms, which have arisen in protestant communities, been diminished! It would be superfluous to recapitulate other instances; these, it is presumed, being abundantly sufficient to obviate any charge of the most distant approach towards the fatal doctrine of Necessity.

CHAP. XV.

On the distinguishing character of Christianity.

The great leading truths of Scripture are few in number, though the spirit of them is diffused through every page. The being and attributes of the Almighty; the spiritual worship which he requires; the introduction of natural and moral evil in the world; the restoration of man; the life, death, character, and offices of the Redeemer; the holy example he has given us; the divine system of ethics which he has bequeathed us; the awful sanctions with which they are enforced; the spiritual nature of the eternal world; the necessity of repentance; the pardon of sin through faith in a Redeemer; the offer of divine assistance; and the promise of eternal life. The Scripture describes a multitude of persons who exemplify its truth; whose lives bear testimony to the perfection of the divine law; and whose characters, however clouded with infirmity, and subject to temptation, yet, acting under its authority and influence, evince, by the general tenor of their conduct, that they really embrace religion as a governing principle of the heart, and as the motive to all virtue in the life.

In forming the mind of the royal pupil, an early introduction to these Scriptures, the depository of such important truths, will doubtless be considered as a matter of prime concern. And as her mind opens, it will be thought necessary to point out to her, how one great event led to another still greater; till at length we see a series accomplished, and an immovable foundation laid for our faith and hope, which includes every essential principle of moral virtue and genuine happiness.

To have given rules for moral conduct might appear, to mere human wisdom, the aptest method of improving our nature.—And, accord

ingly, we find such a course generally pursued by the ancient moralists, both of Greece and Asia. Of this, it is not the least inconvenient result, that rules must be multiplied to a degree the most burthensome and perplexing. And there would be, after all, a necessity for incessant alteration, as the rules of one age could not be expected to correspond with the manners of another. This inconvenience might perhaps, in some degree be avoided, by entailing on a people an undeviating sameness of manners. But, even when this has been effected, how oppressively minute, and how disgustingly trivial are the authorized codes of instruction! Of this every fresh translation from the moral writings of the east is an exemplification; as if the mind could be made pure by overloading the memory!

It is one of the perfections of revealed religion, that, instead of multiplying rules, it establishes principles. It traces up right conduct into a few radical dispositions, which, when once fully formed, are the natural sources of correspondent temper and action. To implant these dispositions, then, is the leading object of what we may venture to call the Scripture philosophy. And as the heart must be the seat of that which is to influence the whole man, so it is chiefly to the heart that the holy Scriptures address themselves. Their object is to make us *love* what is *right*, rather than to occupy our understandings with its theory. *Knowledge puffeth up*, says one of our divine instructors, but it is love that edifieth. And the principle which is here assumed, will be found most strictly true, that if a love of goodness be once thoroughly implanted, we shall not need many rules; but we shall act aright from what we may almost call a noble kind of instinct. 'If thine eye be single,' says our Saviour, 'thy whole body shall be full of light.' Our religion, as taught in the Scripture, does, in this very instance, evince its heavenly origin. St. Paul, whose peculiar province it seems to have been to explain, as it were scientifically, the great doctrines of his master, gives us a definition of Christianity, which outdoes at once in brevity, in fulness, and even in systematic exactness all that has been achieved in the art of epitomizing, by the greatest masters of human science,—*Faith which worketh by love.*

It is not too much to affirm, that this expression substantially contains the whole scope and tenor of both Testaments; the substance of all morality, and the very life and soul of human virtue and happiness. A want of attention to what St Paul means by *faith*, too generally makes the sense of the passage be overlooked. But the well-directed student will discern, that St. Paul assumes exactly what has been intimated above, that God's object in Revelation is not *merely* to convey his *will*, but also to manifest *himself*; not *merely* to promulgate laws for restraining or regulating conduct, but to display his *own* nature and attributes, so as to bring back to himself the hearts and affections of fallen man; and that, accordingly, he means by faith, the effectual and impressive apprehension of God, thus manifested. In his language, it is not a notion of the intellect, nor a tradition coldly residing in the recollection, which the Scriptures exhibit, but an actual persuasion of the divine realities. It is, in short, such a conviction of what is revealed, as gives it an efficacy equal for every practical purpose, to that which is derived through the evidence of our senses.

Faith, then, in St. Paul's language, is religion in its simplest, inward principle. It is the deep and efficacious impression, which the manifestation of God, made to us in the Scripture, ought in all reason to produce in our hearts; but which it does not produce until, in answer to our earnest prayer, his holy Spirit 'opens, as it were, our hearts,' to receive the things which are thus presented to our minds. When the unseen realities of religion, are able to do more with us than the tempting objects of this visible world, then and not before, is the divine grace of faith really formed within us.

That this is the scriptural idea of faith, will appear at once, from a perusal of that most interesting portion of Scripture the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. The definition with which the chapter commences, states this precise notion:—'Faith is the *substantiation* of things hoped for, the *demonstration* of things not seen.'* And the instances adduced are most satisfactory exemplifications. 'By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, being moved with fear, prepared an ark,' &c. 'By faith, Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.' 'With the heart,' says St. Paul, 'man believeth unto righteousness; that is, when the infinitely awful and inexpressibly engaging views of God, manifesting himself in the Scripture, as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, really, and effectually impress themselves on our hearts, so as to become the paramount principle of inward and outward conduct; then, and not before, we are in the Scripture sense, believers. And this faith, if real, must produce love; for, when our minds and hearts are thus impressed, our affections must of necessity yield to that impression.—If virtue, said a heathen, could be seen with human eyes, what astonishing love would it excite in us! St. Paul's divine faith realizes this very idea. If Moses 'endured as *seeing* him who is invisible,' it could only be, because, in seeing God, he beheld what filled up his whole soul, and so engaged his hopes and fears, but, above all, his love, as to raise him above the low allurements of the world, and the puny menaces of mortals. It is said of him; that 'he accounted even the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;' a preference which implies the strongest *affection*, as well as the deepest *conviction*. His case, then, clearly illustrates what St. Paul says of *faith working by love;* his apprehension of God being so deep and lively, as to fix his supreme love on that supreme excellence, which was thus, as it were, visible to his mind; the current of his temper, and the course of his actions, followed this paramount direction of his heart.

* I thus venture to strengthen the expression in the authorised translation, in order to convey some clearer idea of the original terms, which, as the best critics allow, have, perhaps, a force to which no English words can do justice.

The Scripture then, in reality, does not so much *teach us how* to be virtuous, as, if we comply with its intention, actually *makes* us so. It is St. Paul's argument through the Epistle to the Romans, that even the most perfect code of laws which could be given, would fall infinitely short of our exigencies, if it only gave the rules, without inspiring the disposition.

The law of Moses had afforded admirable moral precepts, and even the sages of the heathen world had found out many excellent maxims; but, an inspiriting principle, by which men might be made to *love* goodness as well as to *know* it, was that of which the Gentiles, and, in some measure, the Jews also, stood in need. And to furnish this principle by inspiring such a faith in God, as must produce love to God, and, by producing love to God, become operative in every species of virtue, is avowedly the supreme object of the gospel of Christ.

And, therefore, it is that the Scripture represents to us *facts*, and doctrines founded on facts, rather than *theories*; because facts are alone fitted to work on the heart. In theories, the understanding acts for itself; in apprehending facts, it acts subserviently to the higher powers of the soul, merely furnishing to the affections those objects for which they naturally look; and distinguishing false and seductive appearances from real sources of delight and comfort. In this way the sacred Scriptures make the fullest use of our rational powers, uniformly presenting such facts, as grow clearer the more severely they are examined: completely satisfying our understandings, as to their aptness to the great purpose of working on our hearts, and, on the whole, making our religion as reasonable, as if, like the mathematical truth, it had been exclusively addressed to our intellect; while its influence on the rightly disposed heart gives such an inward proof of its divinity as no merely rational scheme could, in the nature of things, possess.

Let, then, the royal pupil be carefully taught, that Christianity is not to be examined, nor the sacred Scriptures perused, as if they were merely to be believed, and remembered, and held in speculative reverence. But, let it rather be impressed upon her, that the holy Scriptures are God's great means of producing in her heart, that awe of his presence, that reverence of his majesty, that delight in his infinite perfections, that practical affectionate knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent, which constitutes the *rest*, the *peace*, the *strength*, the *light*, the *consolation* of every soul which attains to it. Let her be taught to regard the oracles of God, not merely as a light to guide her steps, but, as a sacred fire to animate and invigorate her inmost soul. A purifying flame, like that upon the altar, from whence the seraph conveyed the coal to the lips of the prophet, who cried out, 'Lo! this hath touched my lips, and mine iniquity is taken away, and my sin is purged.'

That fear of God, which the Scripture, when used as it ought, never fails to inspire, is felt by the possessor to be essential wisdom; and that love of God, which it is no less fitted to excite, is equally acknowledged by him whom it influences, to be at once essential virtue, and essential happiness; and both united, are found to be that pure element in which rational intelligences are formed to live, and out of which they must ever be perturbed and miserable.

But, to make the Scripture thus efficacious, it must be studied according to the will of him who gave it. It is said of our Saviour in the instance of his disciples,—'Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures;' and it is said of Lydia, saint Paul's first convert at Philippi, 'That the Lord opened her heart, to attend to the things which were spoken of Paul.' We read of others of whom it is observed, 'the gospel was preached, but it did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.' What follows? evidently, that the Scripture, to be read effectually, must be read devoutly, with earnest and constant prayer to him whose word it is, that he would so impress it on our hearts, by his good Spirit, that it may become the power of God unto salvation. 'If any man lack wisdom let him ask it of God,' says St. James, 'who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.'

But, one grand peculiarity of Christianity remains to be mentioned—That it addresses us not merely as ignorant, but as prejudiced and corrupt; as needing not merely instruction, but reformation. This reformation can be accomplished, these prejudices and these corruptions can be removed, only by divine power. It is a new creation of the soul, requiring no less than its original formation, the hand of the divine artificer. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him.' God must reveal them by his Spirit: he must produce the disposition to receive them.

To this end no kind of previous knowledge is more conducive than the knowledge of ourselves as fallen, depraved, and helpless creatures; and, therefore, absolutely requiring some such gracious interposition in our favour as that which the Scripture offers. Exactly as the malady is felt, will the remedy be valued; and, consequently, no instruction can be more indispensable for the royal pupil, than that which tends to impress on her mind, that in this respect she stands on a level with the meanest of her fellow-creatures. That, from the natural corruption of every human heart whatever amiable qualities an individual may possess, each carries about with him a root of bitterness, which, if not counteracted by the above means, will spread itself through the whole soul, disfigure the character, and disorder the life; that this malignant principle, while predominant, will admit but of a shadowy and delusive semblance of virtue, which temptation ever dissipates, and from which the heart never receives solid comfort. Who can enumerate the hourly calamities which the proud, the self-willed, the voluptuous, are inflicting on themselves; which rend and lacerate the bosom, while no eye perceives it? Who can express the daily disappointment, the alternate fever and lassitude of him, whose heart knows of no rest, but what this disordered world can afford?

Who then is happy? He alone, whether prince or subject, who, through the powerful and salutary influence of revealed religion on his heart, is so impressed with things invisible, as to rise superior to the vicissitudes of mortality: who so believes and feels what is contained in the Bible, as to make God his refuge, his Saviour his trust, and true practical holiness the chief object of his pursuit. To such a one his Bible, and his closet, are a counterpoise to all the trials and the violence to which he may be exposed. 'Thou shalt hide them privily,' says the Psalmist, 'by thine own presence, from the provoking of all men; thou shalt keep them secretly in thy pavilion from the strife of tongues.

CHAP. XVI.

On the Scripture evidences of Christianity.—The Christian religion peculiarly adapted to the exigencies of men; and especially calculated to supply the defects of heathen philosophy.

If Christianity were examined with attention, and candour, it would be found to contain irresistible evidences of its divine origin. Those who have formed continued trains of argument in its support, have, no doubt, often effected very valuable purposes; but it is certain, that conviction may be attained in a much simpler method. In fact, it would imply a very reasonable charge against Christianity, if its proofs were of such a nature, that none but scholars or philosophers could feel their conclusiveness.

A book exists in the world, purporting to contain the authentic records, and authoritative principles of the one true religion. It is obviously the work not of one person, or of one age. Its earliest pages, on the contrary, are, beyond all sober question, the most ancient writings in the world; while its later parts were confessedly composed at a time much within the limits of historic certainty; a time, indeed, with which we are better acquainted than with any other period in the retrospect of ancient history; and which, like a distant eminence brightly illuminated by the rays of the sun, is distinctly seen, while intermediate tracts are involved in impenetrable mist.

Against the authority of this most interesting volume, numberless objections have been raised. But, who has yet clearly and satisfactorily shown how its existence, in the form it bears, can be rationally accounted for, on the supposition of its spuriousness? That a series of records originating so variously both as to time, occasion, and circumstances, should involve some obscurity or difficulty, or even in some instances apparent incongruity, is surely no cause of wonder: and that these should be dwelt upon and exaggerated by persons hostile to the principles which the volume contains, and which its truth would establish, is most natural. But, which of those objectors has ever been able to substitute a system less liable to objection? Have any of them given a satisfactory solution of the unparalleled difficulties which clog *their* hypothesis? Which of them has even attempted fully to explain the simple phenomenon of such a volume being in the world, on the supposition of fabrication or imposture?

This book divides itself into two great portions, the first containing the account of a preparatory religion, given to a single nation; the latter describing the completion of the scheme, so far as to fit this religion for general benefit, and unlimited diffusion.

Respecting the first great portion which we call the Old Testament, the leading features appear peculiarly striking. In this book alone, during those ages, was maintained the first great truth, of there being *only* ONE *living and true God:* which, though now so universally acknowledged, was then unconceived by the politest nations, and most accomplished philosophers. And respecting both portions of this book, but especially the latter, known by the name of the New Testament, this no less interesting remark is to be made, that, in every essential point, nearly the same view is taken of man's weaknesses and wants, of the nature of the human mind, and what is necessary to its ease and comfort, as is taken by the wisest heathen philosophers; with this most important difference, however, that the *chief good* of man, that *pure perennial mental happiness*, about which they so much discoursed, after which they so eagerly panted, but of which they so confessedly failed, is here spoken of substantially, in their notion of it, as a blessing actually *possessed*, and the feeling of it described in such language as bears, so far as it is possible for human expressions to bear, the stamp of conscious truth and unsophisticated nature.

May we be allowed, in this connexion, to give a superficial sketch of the defects in the system of the ancient philosophers? The belief in a life to come was confined to a few, and even in them this belief was highly defective. Those who asserted it, maintained it only in a speculative and sceptical way; and it would not be easy to produce an instance of their using any doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state, as their *instrument in promoting virtue.* They decorated their system with beautiful sayings, on the immortality of the soul; but they did not support it upon *this* basis. There was, therefore, no foundation to their fabric. *Poetry*, indeed, had her Elysium, and her Tartarus. It appears, however, that the *philosophy* of Greece and Rome, in proportion as it advanced, diminished the strength of the impression which the poets had made on the minds of the vulgar, and thus the very religion of the sages tended to lessen among the people the sense of a future responsibility.

The ancient philosophers had no idea of what we designate by the name of the *grace and mercy of God.* They had some conception of his bounty, of his providential care, of all his natural perfections; and of some even of his moral excellences; for example, of his benevolence and justice. But their united wisdom never framed a sentence like that in which the true God was revealed to Moses: 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' It is on this part

of the character of God, that the Scripture is so abundantly full. This ignorance of the mercy of God associated itself in the heathens, with much other religious and moral blindness. From this ignorance, that God was merciful, their only means of persuading themselves that they were in his favour, was to assume that they were upright. And, who can estimate the moral consequences of an habitual effort to represent to ourselves all our own actions, as not having any of the guilt of sin, and as not impeaching our claims to the justice of the Almighty? The lofty sentiment, that they were themselves a species of gods, was sometimes resorted to, at once as a source of self-complacency, and as the supposed means of virtue. The Stoic affected to rise superior to the temptations of the body, to soar above all sense of guilt, and all dread of pain, by the aid of an extravagant, and almost atheistical sentiment, which was opposite to common sense, and subversive of all true humility, a quality which is the very basis of Christian virtues. He was his own god: for he assumed to himself to be able, by his own strength, if he would but exert it, to triumph over fortune; in other words, over Providence, over pain, fear, and death itself; and to rise, by the same strength, into a participation of the nature of the Eternal. Thus, as an eminent writer has observed, 'those who endeavoured to cure voluptuousness, resorted to pride as the means of virtue.' In the latter ages, indeed, not a few appear to have been at once elated by stoical pride, and dissolved in epicurean luxury.

Their doctrine even of a Providence, connected as it was with the merely mundane system, led to much misconception of the nature of true morality, and to gross superstition. From ignorance of future retribution, they imagined that virtue and vice received their exact recompence *here*. They were religious, therefore, even to superstition, in assuming the existence of providential interference in the case of the commission of palpable crimes; and they were tempted to esteem those actions, however sinful, to be no offences against God, which God did not mark by some temporal punishment.*

Such appear to have been some of the chief deficiencies of the heathen system; a system which strongly points out the want of such a light as that which the Gospel affords. The philosophers themselves seemed conscious of some great defect, and thus the very revelation which Christianity has furnished, supplied all that was necessary to man, and comes recommended by the acknowledged occasion for it.

How striking are the peculiarities, how obvious the superiority, which even on a first attentive perusal, fill the mind of the serious reader of the Scripture! But what infidel writer has so much as taken its most obvious facts into sober consideration? who has attempted to explain how the writers of the Old Testament should differ as they have done from all the writers in the world, not only in maintaining so pure a theology, but in connecting with it a national history, through which that theology passes as a chain, binding together and identifying itself with their whole system, civil and religious? This history, involving supernatural events, may be a reason why the wilful infidel should reject it without examination. But let him who pretends to candour, attentively consider these records, and try if he can project even an outline of Jewish history, from which those miraculous interpositions shall be consistently excluded. There are facts in this narration which cannot be disputed: the Jews necessarily having a history as well as other nations. Let the sober infidel, then, endeavour to make out for them an hypothetic history, in which, leaving out every thing miraculous, all the self-evident phenomena shall be accounted for with philosophic plausibility. If this be possible, why has it not been attempted? But if this be really impracticable, I mean, if these events do actually so make up the body of their national history, that no history would be left, if they were to be taken away; then let some farther theory be devised, to explain how a history, thus exclusively strange, should stand connected with a theology as exclusively true? Let the sober deist prove, if he can, that it was unworthy of the God of nature to distinguish, by such extraordinary interferences, that nation, which alone, of all the nations of the earth, acknowledged him; or let him separate, if he be able, that national recognition of the true God from their belief of those distinguishing interpositions. If they alone acknowledged the rightful sovereign of the universe, who believed that that sovereign had signally manifested himself in their behalf, can the deist show that the belief of the events was not essential to the acknowledgment of the supposed author of them? Or will he assert, that the establishment of such a truth amongst that people, who have since actually communicated it to so many other men, perhaps to all, deists not excepted, who really do embrace it; I say, will he soberly assert that such a purpose did not justly and consistently warrant the very kind of interposition, which the Jewish history presents?

But let the honest infidel, if such there be, take further into the account the manner in which the maintainers of the one true God have acted upon that belief. Let him examine the principles of the Jewish *moralists*, and see where else, in the ancient world, the genuine interests of virtue are so practically provided for. Let him read the sublime and most cordial effusions of the Old Testament *poets*, and say, where else the Author of Being, and of all good, is so fully recognised, or so suitably adored? Let him consider the expostulation of the *prophets*, and the self-criminating records of the *historian*, and find for them any shadow of parallel in the history of mankind. Let the man of *genius* observe how the minds of the writers were elevated, on what a strong and steady pinion they soared. Let the man of *virtue* reflect how deeply their hearts were engaged; and let the man of *learning* compare what he reads here with all that has come from heathen poets, sages, or lawgivers; and then, let it be soberly pronounced, whether it is conceivable that all this should exist, without some adequate cause, and, whether

* A striking instance of this disposition to abuse the doctrine of Providence, was exhibited in the speech of Nicias to his soldiers, after they were defeated at Syracuse.

any cause can be so rationally assigned, as that which their venerable lawgiver has himself expressed in terms the most critically opposite, and the most unaffectedly impressive? 'Ask now,' says he, 'of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon earth; and ask from the one side of heaven to the other, whether there had been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard, and live? or has God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you, in Egypt, before your eyes? Unto thee it was shown that the Lord He is God; there is none else beside him. Know, therefore, this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God; in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath, there is none else.'

If such be the inevitable conclusion respecting the Old Testament, how much more irresistible must be the impression made by the New! The peculiarity which was adverted to above, ought, even in the eye of a philosophical inquirer, to engage deep attention. I mean, that to which heathen sages pointed, as the only valuable object of human pursuit, is in this wonderful volume described as matter of *possession*. Here, and here only, amongst all the records of human feelings, is *happiness* seriously claimed, and consistently exemplified. To the importance of this point, witness is borne by every wish which a human being forms, and by every sigh which heaves his bosom. But, it is a fact, perhaps not yet sufficiently adverted to, that at no period do heathen sages seem so strongly to have felt the utter insufficiency of all their schemes for attaining this object, as at the period when the light of Christianity diffused itself through the earth. Cicero, that brightest of Roman luminaries, had not only put his countrymen in possession of the substance of Grecian wisdom, to which his own rich eloquence gave new force and lustre, but he had added thereto the deep results of his own observations, during a life of the most diversified experience, and a period the most eventful. And, to this point, he uniformly brings all his disquisitions, that man can only be happy by *a conquest over himself*; by some energetic principle of wisdom and virtue so established in his bosom, as to make him habitually superior to every wrong passion, to every criminal or weak desire, to the attractions of pleasure, and the shocks of calamity. But it was not Cicero only, who rested in this conclusion: Horace, the gayest of the Latin poets, is little less explicit in his acknowledgment, that man should then only find ease when he had learnt the art *of flying, in a moral sense, from himself*.

To the sentiment of a great philosopher and poet, let us add that of a no less eminent historian. Polybius says, 'It seems that men, who, in the practice of craft and subtlety, exceed all other animals, may, with good reason, be acknowledged to be no less depraved than they; for other animals are subservient only to the appetites of the body, and by them are led to do wrong. But men, who have also sentiment to guide them, are guilty of ill conduct, not less through the abuse of their acquired reason, than from the force of their natural desires.*

Although, therefore, the doctrine of human depravity be, strictly speaking, a tenet peculiar to Revelation; since it is the Bible alone which teaches how sin entered into the world, and death, with all its attendant woes and miseries, by sin; though it is there alone that we discover the obscurity and confusion which there is in the understanding of the natural man, the crookedness of his will, and the disorder of his affections; though it is there alone that we are led to the origin, and, blessed be God, to the remedy of this disease, in the renewal of our nature, which is the peculiar office of the holy Spirit to effect; yet, the wisest and more discerning among the heathens both felt and acknowledged, in no inconsiderable degree, the thing itself. They experienced not a little of the general weight and burthen of the effect, though they were still puzzled and confounded in their inquiry after the cause. And their continual disappointment here was an additional source of conviction, that the malady, which they painted in the deepest colourings of language, *did* exist. They seemed to have a perception, that there was an object somewhere, which might remedy these disorders, aid these infirmities, satisfy these desires, and bring all their thoughts and faculties into a due obedience and happy regulation. They had a dawning on their minds, that a capacity for happiness was not entirely lost, nor the object to fill and satisfy it quite out of reach. In fact, they felt the greatness of the human mind, but they felt it as a vast vacuity in which, after all, they could find nothing but phantoms of happiness, and realities of misery.

To these deep-toned complaints, in which all sorts and conditions of men united, Christianity comes forward to make the first propositions of relief. She recognises every want and weakness precisely as these sages represented it: and she confidently offers the very remedy for which they so loudly called. Her professed object is to establish, in the human mind, that collateral principle of virtuous and happy superiority to every thing earthly, sensual, and selfish, on which philosophy had so long fixed its anxious, but hopeless desires, and to which alone it looked for real felicity.

In this view, then, Christianity rests her pretensions, not merely on historical evidences, however satisfactory, nor on the fidelity of successive transcribers, however capable of proof; but, on a much more internal, and even more conclusive title; its exquisite correspondence to the exigencies of human nature, as illustrated by the wisest of all ages and nations, and as felt by every reflecting child of mortality.

Let, then, the deepest sentiments of heathen philosophers and poets, respecting human nature, be dispassionately compared with those expressions of our blessed Saviour, in which he particularly describes the benefits to be enjoyed

* Hampton's Polybius, book 17, p. 393.

by his faithful followers; and let it be judged, whether there is not such a correspondence between what *they want*, and what *he professes to bestow*, as occurs in no other instance in the intellectual world.—*Rest* for their souls, is what they anxiously sought: and, a burning fever of the mind, in which corroding care, insatiable desire, perpetual disappointment, unite in torturing, is the malady of which they uniformly complain. Is it not then wonderful to hear our Saviour so admirably adapt his language to their very feelings? 'Come unto me,' says he, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*.' Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find *rest* to your souls.'—'He that drinketh of this water, shall thirst again,' intimating by this very expression, the insufficiency of every thing earthly to satisfy the mind, 'but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.'

Whoever is acquainted with the language of the ancient philosophers must see, that in these expressions our Saviour meets their wishes; we do not mean to say, that they had or could have any right apprehensions of that preliminary abasement which the Scripture calls repentance, and which was put to them in possession of the rest and peace for which they sought, and which Christ does actually bestow. We do not mean to say, that the pride of unassisted nature could allow them to see that they were indeed objects of pure mercy on the part of God; and that their knowledge of themselves, or of him, could be such as to bring the real spirit of their wishes to any actual coincidence with the wonderful means which God, in his goodness, had devised to satisfy them. Though they did occasionally express a sense of an evil nature, and a wish for relief from it, yet who but the author of our religion ever met those wishes? In what other instance has a moral physician thus pledged himself to relieve angonised human nature? If there be no such instance, the conclusion is inevitable: that Christianity, from the deep importance, as well as the unrivalled singularity of its overtures, justly claims our most serious inquiry, whether what has been thus promised has been actually accomplished.

Christianity has amply provided for this natural demand; for it has been ordered, that while the New Testament contains every principle necessary for the attainment of human happiness, it should also give us a perfect specimen of its own efficacy. This we accordingly have in the fully delineated character of the apostle St. Paul. There is, perhaps, no human person in all antiquity, of whose inmost feelings, as well as outward demeanour, we are so well enabled to judge, as of this great Christian teacher. The particulars respecting him the Acts of the Apostles, compared with, and illustrated by, his own invaluable epistles, make up a full length portrait of him, in which no lineament is wanting. And, the wisdom of God, in this single arrangement, has furnished a body of evidence in support, both of the truth and the efficacy of our holy religion, which, when attentively examined, will ever satisfy the sincere, and silence the caviller.

The numberless minute and unobvious coincidences between the narrative and the epistles, have been so illustrated in a late invaluable work,* as to make the authenticity of both matter of absolute demonstration; and, from such an instance of Christian influence, thus authenticated, the pretensions of Christianity itself may be brought to a summary and unequivocal test.

Was St. Paul, then, or was he not, an exemplification of that nobly-imagined wise man, which the heathen philosophers had pictured to themselves; as the height of human felicity? Does he appear to have found that rest, for which sages panted, and which his divine master proposed to bestow? Did he possess that virtuous and happy superiority to every thing earthly, sensual, and selfish, which was acknowledged to constitute the very essence of true philosophy? Let him that understands human nature read, and answer for himself. Let him collect all that has been spoken on this subject by Socrates or Plato, by Cicero or Seneca, by Epictetus or Marcus Antonius, and judge coolly, whether St. Paul does not substantially exemplify, and, I may add, infinitely out do it all?

Horace has celebrated the fortitude of Regulus, in one of his most animated odes; but it may most soberly be asked, what was the fortitude of this pagan hero, when compared with that which was unconsciously displayed by St. Paul in his way to Jerusalem? Regulus, we are told, would not turn his eyes towards his wife or his children. In his heroism, therefore, he sinks his humanity. Not so our apostle; while he fears nothing for himself, he feels every thing for those around him. 'What mean ye thus to weep, and to break my heart,' says he, 'for I am ready, not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.' If this be not perfect magnanimity, where was it ever exhibited?

I will add but two instances.—One expressing the feelings which were habitual to himself; the other describing that perfection of goodness, which he wished to be pursued by others: and let the learned infidel find, if he can, a parallel for either. In speaking of himself, after acknowledging an act of friendship in those to whom he writes, he says, 'Not as though I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' What a testimonial this to the faithfulness of the offer of our Saviour, to which we have already referred! How consummately does it evince, that when he engaged to fulfil that deepest of human desires, the thirst of happiness, he promised no more than he was infinitely able to perform! The apostle's exhortation to others, is no less worthy of attention. 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things

* Paley's Horæ Paulinæ.

are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.' In what human words did genuine moral feelings ever more completely embody itself? Are they not, as it were, the very soul and body of true philosophy? But what philosopher, before him, after such a lesson to his pupils, could have dared to add the words which immediately follow?—'The things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, *do*, and the God of peace shall be with you.'

This is a most imperfect portion of that body of internal evidence, which even the most general view of Christianity presses on the attentive and candid mind: and with even this before us, may it not be boldly asked, what else like this has come within human knowledge? On these characters of the gospel then, let the infidel fairly try his strength. Let him disprove, if he can, the correspondence between the wishes of philosophy, and the achievements of Christianity, or destroy the identity of that common view of man's chief good, and paramount happiness. Let him account, if he can, for these unexampled congruities, on any other ground than that of the truth of Christianity; or let him even plausibly elude the matter-of-fact evidence to this truth, which arises from St. Paul's character. In the mean time, let the pious Christian enjoy his sober triumph in that system, which not in St. Paul only, but in all its true votaries, in every age and nation, it has produced—'a hope full of immortality,'—'a peace which passeth all understanding,'—'a wisdom pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.'

If any difficulty, attending particular doctrines of Christianity, should present itself; it will be well first to inquire, whether the doctrine in question be really Christian? and this can only be determined by a dispassionate and impartial recurrence to the Scriptures themselves, particularly the New Testament. Whatever is clearly asserted there, follows inevitably from the established divinity of that which contains it. And in what conceivable case can, not only humility, but rational consistency, be more wisely exercised, than in receiving, without question, the obvious parts, and then no doubt can be entertained respecting the whole. Happy had it been for the Christian world, had this self-evident maxim been practically attended to; for then what dispute could possibly have arisen about—'that Word which was made flesh, and dwelt among us, being also God over all, blessed for evermore?' Or whether the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose name we are baptised, must not be essentially divine? Or whether there can be any misconception in what the redeemed in heaven make the subject of their eternal song: 'that the Lamb which was slain, had redeemed them to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?'

That plain and simple readers think they find each other's doctrines clearly set forth in the sacred volume, is a matter of fact, authenticated by abundant evidence; and that, where they have been disputed, those who have agreed in holding them, have evidently derived a deeper influence from Christianity, both as to the conduct of their lives, and the comfort of their minds, than those who have rejected them,—if it could not be substantiated by innumerable proofs, would be almost self-evident, on a merely theoretic view of the two cases. For who ever derived either partial strength, or mental comfort, from indulging a habit of metaphysical disquisition? And who but such have, in any age of the church, questioned the doctrines of our Saviour's divinity, the three fold distinction in the divine nature, or the expiatory efficacy of Christ's *one oblation of himself, once offered for the sins of the whole world*?

The Scriptures are so explicit on the last mentioned great doctrine of our religion, that we are not left to infer its truth and certainty as we might almost do from the obvious exigencies of human nature. That guilt is one of the deepest of the natural feelings, will not be disputed; and, that the sense of guilt has been, in every age and nation a source of the deepest horrors, and has suggested even still more horrible methods of appeasing the perturbed mind, can be questioned by none who is acquainted, however slightly, with the history of the world. Atheists in pagan countries have made this very fact the great apology for their impiety, charging upon religion itself the dismal superstitions, which appeared to them to arise from it. And Plutarch, one of the most enlightened of heathen moralists, concludes that even Atheism itself is preferable to that superstitious dread of the gods, which he saw impelling so many wretched victims to daily and hourly self-torture. The fact is, no misery incident to man involves either greater depth, or complication, than that of a guilty conscience. And a system of religion, which would have left this unprovided for, we may venture to pronounce, would have been utterly unsuitable to man, and, therefore, utterly unworthy of the wisdom and goodness of God.

How appositely to this awful feeling, does the doctrine of the atonement come into the christian system! How astonishingly has even its general belief chased from the christian world those superstitious phantoms with which paganism ever has been, and even at this day is, haunted! But above all, what relief has it afforded to the humble penitent! 'This,' said the pious Melancthon, 'can only be understood in conflicts of conscience.' It is most true. Let those therefore, who have never felt such conflicts, beware how they despise what they may yet be impelled to resort to, as the only certain stay and prop of their sinking spirits. 'It is a fearful thing,' says an inspired writer, 'to fall into the hands of the living God.' Against this fear to what resource could we trust, but that which the mercy of God has no less clearly revealed to us? 'Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest that is passed for us into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession; for we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly to

the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.'

CHAP. XVII.

The use of history in teaching the choice of favourites —Flattery.—Our taste improved in the arts of adulation.—The dangers of flattery exemplified.

It is not from the history of good princes alone, that signal instruction may be reaped. The lives of the criminal and unfortunate, commonly unfortunate because criminal, will not be read in vain. They are instructive, not only by detailing the personal calamities with which the misconduct was followed, but by exhibiting that misconduct as the source of the alienation of the hearts of their subjects; and often as the remote, sometimes as the immediate, cause of civil commotions and revolutions.

But caution is to be learned, not from their vices only, but from their weaknesses and errors; from their false judgments, their ignorance of human nature, their narrow views arising from a bad education, their judging from partial information, deciding from infused prejudices, and acting on party principles; their being habituated to consider petty unconnected details, instead of taking in the great aggregate of public concerns; their imprudent choice of ministers, their unhappy spirit of favouritism, their preference of selfish flatterers to disinterested counsellors, and making the associates of their pleasures the dispensers of justice and the ministers of public affairs.*

'Tis by that close acquaintance with the characters of men which history supplies, that a prince must learn how to avoid a jealous Sejanus, a vicious Tigellinus, a corrupt Spenser and Gavaston, a rapacious Epsom and Dudley, a pernicious D'Ancre, and ambitious Wolsey, a profligate Buckingham; we allude at once to the minister of the first James, and to the still more profligate Buckingham of the Second Charles; a tyrannical Richelieu, a crafty Mazarin, a profuse Louvois, an intriguing Ursini, an inefficient Chamillard, an imperious duchess of Marlborough, and a supple Masham.

History presents frequent instances of an inconsistency not uncommon in human nature,—sovereigns the most arbitrary to their subjects, themselves the tools of favourites. He who treated his people with disdain, and his parliaments with contempt, was, in turn, the slave of Arran, of Car, and of Villiers. His grandson, who boldly intrenched on the liberties of his country, was himself governed by the Cabal.

It may sound paradoxical to assert, that in a period of society, when characters are less strongly marked, a sovereign is, in some respects, in more danger of choosing wrong. In our days, and under our constitution, indeed, it is scarcely possible to err so widely, as to select, for ministers, men of such atrocious characters, as those who have been just held up to detestation. The very improvement of society, therefore, has caused the question to become one of a much nicer kind. It is no longer a choice between men, whose outward characters exhibit a monstrous disproportion to each other. A bold oppressor of the people, the people would not endure. A violent infringer, on the constitution, the parliament would not tolerate. But still out of that class, from which the election must be made, the moral dispositions, the political tendencies, and the religious principles of men may differ so materially, that the choice may seriously affect at once, the credit and happiness of the prince, and the welfare of the country. The conduct of good and bad men will always furnish no inconsiderable means of distinction; yet at a time when gross and palpable enormities are less likely to be endured, it is the more necessary for a prince to be able accurately to discriminate the shades of the characters of public men.

While, therefore, every tendency to art or dissimulation should be reprobated, the most exact caution should be inculcated, and the keenest discernment cultivated, in the royal education. All that can improve the judgment, sharpen the penetration, or give enlarged views of the human mind, should be put in exercise. A prince should possess that sort of sight, which, while it takes in remote views, accurately distinguishes near objects. To the eye of the lynx, which no minuteness can elude, should be added that of the eagle, which no brightness can blind, for whatever dazzles darkens. He should acquire that justness, as well as extent of mind, which should enable him to study the character of his enemies, and decide upon that of his friends; to penetrate keenly, but not invidiously, into the designs of others, and vigilantly to scrutinize his own. His mind should be stored, not with shifts and expedients, but with large and liberal plans; not with stratagems, but resources; not with subterfuges, but principles; not with prejudices, but reasons. He should treasure up sound maxims to teach him to act consistently; be provided with steady measures suited to the probable occasion, together with a promptitude of mind, prepared to vary them so as to meet any contingency.

In no instance will those who have the care of forming the royal pupil find a surer exercise of their wisdom and integrity, than in their endeavours to guard the mind from the deadly poison of flattery. 'Many kings,' says the witty South, 'have been destroyed by poison, but none has been so efficaciously mortal as that drunk in by the ear.'

Intellectual taste, it is true, is much refined, since the Grecian sophist tried to cure the melancholy of Alexander by telling him, that 'Justice was painted, as seated near the throne of Jupiter, to indicate that right and wrong depended on the will of kings; and all whose actions ought to be accounted just, both by themselves and others.'

Compliments are not now absurd and extravagant, as when the most elegant of Roman poets invited his imperial master to pick out his

* The Romans seem to have had just ideas of the dignity of character and office attached to the friend of a prince by denominating him, not favourite, but *particeps curarum*.

own lodging among the constellations: nor, as when the bard of Pharsalia offered to the emperor his choice, either of the sceptre of Jupiter, or the chariot of Apollo; modestly assuring him, that there was not a god in the pantheon, who would not yield his empire to him, and account it an honour to resign in his favour. This meritorious prince, so worthy to displace the gods, was Nero, who rewarded Lucan, not for his adulation, but for being a better poet than himself, with a violent death.

The smooth and obsequious Pliny improved on all anterior adulation. Not content with making his emperor the imitator or the equal of Deity, he makes him a pattern for it; protesting that 'men needed to make no other prayers to the gods, than that they would continue to be as good and propitious lords to them as Trajan had been.'

But the refined sycophant of modern days is more likely to hide the actual blemishes, and to veil the real faults of a prince from himself than to attribute to him incredible virtues the ascription of which would be too gross to impose on his discernment. There will be more danger of a modern courtier imitating the delicacy of the ancient painter, who, being ordered to draw the portrait of a prince who had but one eye, adopted the conciliating expedient of painting him in profile.

But if the modern flatterer be less gross, he will be, on that very account the more dangerous. The refinement of his adulation prevents the object of it from putting himself on his guard. The prince is led, perhaps, to conceive with self-complacency that he is hearing the language of truth, while he is only the dupe of a more accomplished flatterer. He should especially beware of mistaking freedom of manner, for frankness of sentiment; and of confounding the artful familiarities of a designing favourite, with the honest simplicity of a disinterested friend.

Where, in our more correct day, is the courtier who would dare to add profaneness to flattery so far, as to declare, as was done by the greatest philosopher this country ever produced, in his letter to prince Charles, that, 'as the Father had been his Creator, so he hoped the Son would be his Redeemer?'* But what a noble contrast to this base and blasphemous servility in the chancellor of James, does the conduct of the chancellor of his grandson exhibit! The unbending rectitude of Clarendon not only disdained to flatter, in his private intercourse, a master to whom however his pen is always too partial, but it led boldly and honestly to remonstrate against his flagitious conduct. A standing example for all times, to the servants and companions of kings, he resolutely reproved his master to his face, while he thought it his duty to defend him, somewhat too strongly, indeed, to others. He boldly besought the king, 'not to believe that he had a prerogative to declare vice to be virtue.' And in one of the noblest speeches on record, in answer to a dishonourable request of the king, that he would visit some of his majesty's infamous associates; he laid before him with a lofty sincerity, 'the turpitude of a man in his dignified office, being obliged to countenance persons scandalous for their vices, for which by the laws of God and man, they ought to be odious and exposed to the judgment of the church and state.' In this instance superior to his great rival Sully; that no desire of pleasing the king, no consideration of *expediency*, could induce him to visit the royal mistresses, or to countenance the licentious favourites.

Princes have generally been greedy of praise in a pretty exact proportion to the pains which they have taken not to deserve it. Henry the VIIIth was a patron of learned men, and might himself be accounted learned. But his favourite studies, instead of preserving him from the love of flattery, served to lay him open to it. Scholastic divinity, the fashionable learning of the times, as Burnet observes, suited his vain and contentious temper, and as ecclesiastics were to be his critics, his pursuits of polemical theology brought him in the largest revenue of praise, so that there seemed to be a contest between him and them, whether they could offer, or he could swallow, the most copious draughts of flattery.

But the reign of James the first was the great epocha of adulation in England; and a prince who had not one of the qualities of a warlike, and scarcely one of the virtues of a pacific king, received from clergy and laity, from statesmen philosophers, and men of letters, praises not only utterly repugnant to truth and virtue, but directly contrary to that frankness of manners, and magnanimity of spirit, which had formerly characterized Englishmen. This ascription of all rights, and all talents, and all virtues, to a prince, bold through fear, and presumptuous because he wished to conceal his own pusillanimity, rebounded, as was but just, on the flatterers; who, in return for their adulation, were treated by him with a contempt, which not the boldest of his predecessors had ever ventured to manifest. His inquiry of his company at dinner, whether he might not take his subjects' money when he needed it, without the formality of parliament, indicates that one object was always uppermost in his mind;* his familiar intercourse was employed in diving into the private opinions of men, to discover to what length his oppressive schemes might be carried; and his public conduct occupied in putting those schemes into practice.

But the royal person whom we presume to advise, may, from the very circumstance of her sex, have more complicated dangers to resist; against which her mind should be early fortified. The dangers of adulation are doubled, when the female character is combined with the royal. Even the vigorous mind of the great Elizabeth did not guard her against the powerful assaults of the flattery paid to her person. That masculine spirit was as much the slave of the most egregious vanity, as the weakest of her sex could have been. All her admirable prudence and profound policy, could not preserve her from the childish and silly levity with which

* See Howell's Letters.

* The requisition was allowed in a phrase as disgustingly servile, by bishop Neile; as it was pleasantly evaded by Andrews.

she greedily invited the compliments of the artful minister of her more beautiful rival. Even that gross instance of Melvil's extravagance enchanted her, when, as she was playing on Mary's favourite instrument, for the purpose of being overheard by him, the dissembling courtier affected to be so ravished by her skill, as to burst into her apartment, like an enraptured man, who had forgotten his reverence in his admiration. It was a curious combat in the great mind of Elizabeth, between the offended pride of the queen, and the gratified vanity of the woman; but Melvil knew his trade in knowing human nature;—he calculated justly. The woman conquered.

Princes have in all ages complained that they have been ill served. But, is it not because they have not always carefully selected their servants? Is it not because they have too often bestowed confidence on the unwise, and employments on the unworthy? Because, while they have loaded the undeserving with benefits, they have neglected to reward those who have served them well, and to support those who have served them long? Is it not because they have sometimes a way of expecting every thing, while they seem to exact nothing? And have not too many been apt to consider that the honour of serving them is itself a sufficient reward?

By a close study of the weaknesses and passions of a sovereign, crafty and designing favourites have ever been on the watch to establish their own dominion, by such appropriate means as seem best accommodated to the turn of those weaknesses and passions. If Leonore Concini, and the duchess of Marlborough, obtained the most complete ascendancy over their respective queens, both probably by artful flattery at first, they afterwards secured and preserved it by a tyranny the most absolute. In connexions of this nature, it is usually on the side of the sovereign, that the caprice and the haughtiness are expected; but the domineering favourite of Anne exclusively assumed to herself all these prerogatives of despotic power, and exercised them without mercy, on the intimidated and submissive queen; a queen, who, with many virtues, not having had the discernment to find out, that the opposite extreme to what is wrong, is commonly wrong also, in order to extricate herself from her captivity to one favourite, fell into the snares spread for her by the servility of another. Thus, whether the imperious duchess, or the obsequious Masham, were lady of the ascendant, the sovereign was equally infatuated, equally misled.

That attachments formed without judgment, and pursued without moderation, are likely to be dissolved without reason; and that breaches the most trivial in themselves may be important in their consequences, were never more fully exemplified than in the trifling cause, which, by putting an end to the intercourse between the above named queen and duchess, produced events the most unforeseen and extraordinary. While the duke was fighting her majesty's battles abroad, and his duchess supporting his interest against a powerful party at court; a pair of gloves of a new invention, sent first by the milliner to the favourite (impatient to have them before the queen, who had ordered a similar pair,) so incensed her majesty, as to be the immediate cause, by driving the duchess from her post, of depriving the duke of his command, compelling the confederates to agree to a peace, preserving Louis from the destruction which awaited him, making a total revolution in parties at home, and determining the fate of Europe.*

To a monarch more eager to acquire fame than to deserve it, to pension a poet will be a shorter cut to renown than to dispense blessings to his country. Louis XII. instead of buying immortality of a servile bard, earned and enjoyed the appellation of *father of his people;* that people whom his brilliant successor, Louis the *great*, drained and plundered, or in the emphatic language of the prophet, *peeled and scattered* to provide money for his wars, his mistresses, his buildings, and his spectacles. Posterity, however, has done justice to both kings, and *le bien aime* is remembered with affectionate veneration, while *le grand* is regarded as the fabricator of the ruin of his race.

How totally must adulation have blunted the delicacy of the latter prince, when he could shut himself up with his two royal historiographers, Boileau and Racine, to hear them read portions of his own history. Deservedly high as was the reputation of these two fine geniuses, in the walks of poetry, was that history likely to convey much truth or instruction to posterity, which, after being composed by two pensioned poets, was read by them to the monarch, who was to be the hero of the tale? Sovereigns, indeed, may elect poets to record their exploits, but subjects will read historians.

The conquest of every town and village was celebrated by Boileau in hyperbolic song; and the whole pantheon ransacked for deities, who might furnish some faint idea of the glories of the immortal Louis.—The time, however, soon arrived, when the author of the adulatory ode on the taking of Namur, in which the king and the gods were again identified, was as completely overturned by the incomparable travesty of our witty Prior, as the conqueror of Namur himself was, by its glorious deliverer—

> Little Will, the scourge of France,
> No godhead, but the first of men.†

A prince should be accustomed to see and know things as they really are, and should be taught to dread that state of delusion in which the monarch is the only person ignorant of what is doing in his kingdom. It was to little purpose that the sovereign last named, when some temporary sense of remorse was excited by an affecting representation of the miseries of the persecuted protestants, said, 'that he hoped God would not imputo to him as a crime, punishments which he had not commanded.' Delusive hope! It was crime enough for a king to be ignorant of what was passing in his dominions.

There have been few princes so ill-disposed, as not to have been made worse by unmeasured

* Examen du Prince.

† See Boileau's Ode sur la prise de Namur, by Louis and Prior's Poem on the taking of Namur, by king William.

flattery. Even some of the most depraved Roman emperors began their career with a fair promise. Tiberius set out with being mild and prudent; and even Nero, for a considerable time, either wore the mask, or did not need it. While his two virtuous friends maintained their entire influence, every thing looked favourable.—But when his sycophants had succeeded in making Seneca an object of ridicule; and when Tigellinus was preferred to Burrhus all that followed was a natural consequence. The abject slavery of the people, the servile decrees of the senate, the obsequious acquiescence of the court, the prostrate homage of every order, all concurred to bring out his vices in their full luxuriance, and Rome, as was but just, became the victim of the monster she had pampered. Tacitus, with his usual honest indignation, declares, that as often as the emperor commanded banishments or ordered assassinations, so often were thanks and sacrifices decreed to the gods!

But, in our happier days, as subjects, it is presumed, indulge no such propensities, so under our happier constitution, have they no such opportunities. Yet powerful, though gentler, and almost unapparent means, may be employed to weaken the virtue, and injure the fame of a prince. To degrade his character, he need only be led into one vice, idleness; and be attacked by one weapon, flattery. Indiscriminate acquiescence and soothing adulation will lay his mind open to the incursion of every evil without his being aware of it; for his table is not the place where he expects to meet an enemy, consequently, he is not on his guard against him. And where he is thus powerfully assailed, the kindest nature, the best intentions, the gentlest manners, and the mildest dispositions, cannot be depended on for preserving him from those very corruptions, to which the worst propensities lead; and there is a degree of facility, which, from softness of temper, becomes imbecility of mind.

For there is hardly a fault a sovereign can commit, to which flattery may not incline him. It impels to opposite vices: to apathy and egotism, the natural failings of the great; to ambition which inflames the heart, to anger which distorts it, to hardness which deadens, and to selfishness which degrades it. He should be taught, as the intrepid Massilon* taught his youthful prince, that the flattery of the courtier, contradictory as the assertion may seem, is little less dangerous than the disloyalty of the rebel. Both would betray him; and the crime of him who would dethrone, and of him who would debase his prince, however they may differ in a political, differ but little in a moral view: nay, the ill effects of the traitor's crime may, to the prince at least, be bounded by time, while the consequences of the flatterer's may extend to eternity.

CHAP. XVIII.

Religion necessary to the well-being of states.

The royal pupil should be informed, that there are some half Christians, and half philosophers, who wish, without incurring the discredit of renouncing religion, to strip it of its value, by lowering its usefulness. They have been at much pains to produce a persuasion, that however beneficial Christianity may be to individuals, and however properly it may be taken as the rule of their conduct, it cannot be safely brought into action in political concerns; that the intervention of its spirit will rarely advance the public good, but on the contrary, will often necessarily obstruct it; and in particular, that the glory and elevation of states must be unavoidably attended with some violation even of those laws of morality, which, they allow, ought to be observed in other cases.*

These assertions, respecting the political disadvantages of religion, have not been urged merely by the avowed enemies of Christian principles, the Bolingbrokes, the Hobbeses, and the Gibbons: but there is a more sober class of sceptics, ranged under the banners of a very learned and ingenious sophist,† who have not scrupled to maintain, that the author of Christianity has actually forbidden us to improve the condition of this world, to take any vigorous steps for preventing its misery, or advancing its glory. Another writer, an elegant wit, but whimsical and superficial, though doubtless a sincere Christian,‡ who would be shocked at the excess to which impiety has carried the position, has yet afforded some countenance to it, by intimating, that God has given to men a religion which is incompatible with the whole economy of that world which he has created, and in which he has thought proper to place them. He allows, that 'government is essential to men, and yet asserts, that it cannot be managed without certain degrees of violence, corruption, and imposition, which yet Christianity strictly forbids. That perpetual patience under injuries, must every day provoke new insults, and injuries, yet is this, says he, *enjoined*.'

The same positions are also repeatedly affirmed, by a later, more solid, and most admirable writer, whose very able defence of the divine authority of Christianity and the Holy Scriptures, naturally obtains credit for any opinions which are honoured with his support.

It may be expected, that those who advance such propositions, should at least produce proofs from history, that those states, in the government of which Christian principles have been most conspicuous, other circumstances being equal, have either failed through error, or sunk through impotence; or in some other way have suffered from introducing principles into transactions to which they were inapplicable.

But how little the avowed sceptic, or even the paradoxical Christian seems to understand the genius of our religon; and how erroneous is their conception of the true elementary principles of

* See Massilon's Sermons, abounding equally in the sublimest piety and the richest eloquence.

* It were to be wished that Cromwell had been the only ruler who held, that the rules of morality must be dispensed with on great political occasions.

† Mr. Bayle.

‡ Soame Jenyns. It is true, he puts the remark in the mouth of 'refined and speculative observers.' But he afterwards affirms in his own proper person—*That such is indeed the Christian Revelation.*

political prosperity, we learn from one, who was as able as either to determine on the case. He who was not only a politician but a king, and eminently acquainted with the duties of both characters, has assured us, that RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION. And does not every instinct of the unsophisticated heart, and every clear result of dispassionate and enlarged observation, unite in adopting as a moral axiom this divinely recorded aphorism?

It would, indeed, be strange, if the great Author of all things had admitted such an anomaly in his moral government; if in direct contradiction to that moral ordination of causes and effects, by which, in the case of individuals, religion and virtue generally tend, in the way of natural consequence, to happiness and prosperity, irreligion and vice, to discomfiture and misery, the Almighty should have established the directly opposite tendencies, in the case of those multiplications of individuals, which are called civil communities. It is a supposition so contrary to the divine procedure, in every other instance, that it would require to be proved by incontestible evidence. It would indeed amount to a concession, that the moral Author of the world had appointed a premium as it were, for vice and irreligion; the very idea is profaneness. Happily it is clearly contrary also both to reason and experience. Providence, the ordinations of which will ever exhibit marks of wisdom and goodness, in proportion to the care with which they are explored, has, in this instance, as well as in others, made our duty coincident with our happiness; has furnished us with an additional motive for pursuing that course, which is indispensable to our eternal welfare, by rendering it, in the case both of individuals and of communities, productive also of temporal good. It was not enough to make the paths of virtue lead to 'the fulness of joy' hereafter, they are even now rendered to those who walk in them, 'paths of pleasantness and peace.

It would not be difficult to prove, by a reference to the most established principles of human nature, that those dispositions of mind, and principles of conduct, which both directly and indirectly, tend to promote the good order of civil communities, are, in general, produced or strengthened by religion. The same temper of mind which disposes a man to fear God, prompts him to honour the king. The same pride, self-sufficiency, and impatience of controul, which are commonly the root and origin of impiety, naturally produce civil insubordination and discontent. One of the most acute of our political writers has stated, that all government rests on *opinion;* on the opinion entertained by the mass of the people, of *the right to power* in their governors, or in the opinion of its being *their own interest to obey.* Now, religion naturally confirms both these principles; and thereby strengthens the very foundations of the powers of government. It establishes the *right to power* of governors, by teaching, that 'there is no power but of God;' it confirms in subjects the sense of its being *their interest to obey* by the powerful intervention of its higher sanctions and rewards: 'they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation.'

Religion teaches men to consider their lot in life, as a station assigned to them, by Him, who has a right to dispose of his creatures as he will. It therefore tends to prevent in the great mass of the community which must ever be comparatively speaking, poor, the disposition to repine at the more favoured lot, and superior comforts of the higher orders; a disposition which is the real source of the most dangerous and deadly dissensions.

Religion, again, as prompting men to view all human events as under the divine direction, to regard the evils of life as the dispensation of Heaven, and often as capable of being rendered conducive to the most essential and lasting benefit, disposes men to bear all their sufferings with resignation and cheerfulness. Whereas, on the contrary, they who are not under its power, are often inclined to revenge on their rulers, the misfortunes, which unavoidably result from natural causes, as well as those which may be more reasonably supposed to have owed their existence to human imprudence and actual misconduct.

Again, if from contemplating these questions in their principles and elements, we proceed to view them, as they have been exhibited and illustrated by history and experience, we shall find the same positions established with equal clearness and force. Is there any proposition more generally admitted, than that political communities tend to decay and dissolution, in proportion to the corruption of their morals? How often has the authority of the poet been adduced (an author acute and just in his views of life, but not eminent for being the friend of morals or religion) to prove the inefficacy of laws, to avert the progress of a state's decline and fall, while it should be carried forward, too surely, in the downward road, by the general corruption of manners. We have already exemplified these truths, in enumerating the causes of the fall of Rome.* On more than one occasion, that state had owed its preservation to its reverence for the awful sanction of an oath. This principle, and indeed the duty which is so closely connected with it, of truth and general fidelity to engagements, are the very cement which holds together societies, and indeed all, whether greater or smaller, associations of men; and that this class of virtues is founded and bottomed on religion, is undeniably evident.

If we pass from the page of history to a review of private life, are we not led to exactly the same conclusions? Where do the politicians, who reason from the evidence of facts, expect to find a spirit of insubordination and anarchy? Is it not in our crowded cities, in our large manufacturing towns, where wealth is often too dearly purchased at the price of morality and virtue? And if we resort to individual instances, who is the man of peace and quietness? Who is the least inclined to 'meddle with them that are given to change?' Is it not the man of religious and domestic habits whose very connexions, pursuits and hopes, are so many pledges for his adherence to the cause of civil order, and to the support of the laws and institutions of his country?

* Chap. viii.

It is the more extraordinary that any writers, not deliberately hostile to the cause of religion and virtue, should have given any degree of countenance to the pernicious error, which we have been so long combating; because the opposite opinion has been laid down as an incontestible axiom, by those who will not be suspected of any extravagant zeal for the credit of religion, but, who speak the dictates of strong sense and deep observation. Hear then the able, but profligate Machiavel—'Those princes and commonwealths, who would keep their governments entire and uncorrupt, are above all things, to have a care of religion and its ceremonies, and preserve them in due veneration, for in the whole world, there is not a greater sign of imminent ruin, than when God and his worship are despised.'—'A prince therefore, ought most accurately to regard, that his religion be well-founded, and then his government will last; for there is no surer way, than to keep that good and united. Whatever therefore occurs, that may any way be extended to the advantages and reputation of the religion they design to establish, by all means, they are to be propagated and encouraged; and the wiser the prince, the more sure it is to be done.'—'And if this care of divine worship were regarded by christian princes, according to the precepts and instructions of him who gave it at first, the states and commonwealths of Christendom would be much more happy and firm.'*

Machiavel, it will be said, was at once an infidel and a hypocrite, who did not believe the truth of that religion, the observance of which he solicitously enforced. Be it so; it still deducts nothing from the force of the argument as to the political uses of religion.—For if the mere forms and institutions, the outward and visible signs, of Christianity, were acknowledged to be, as they really are, of so great value, by this shrewd politician, what might not be the effect of its 'inward and spiritual grace?'

When two able men of totally opposite principles and characters, pointedly agree in any important topic, there is a strong presumption that they meet in a truth. Such an unlooked for conformity may be found, in two writers, so decidedly opposite to each other, as our incomparable bishop Butler, and the Florentine secretary above cited. Who will suspect Butler of being a visionary enthusiast? Yet has he drawn a most beautiful picture of the happiness of an imaginary state, which should be perfectly virtuous for a succession of ages. 'In such a state,' he insists, there would be no faction. Public determinations would really be the result of united wisdom. All would contribute to the general prosperity, and each would enjoy the fruits of his own virtue. Injustice, force, and fraud, would be unknown—Such a kingdom would influence the whole earth; the *head* of it indeed would be a universal monarch, in a new sense, and *all people, nations, and languages should serve him.*'†

The profound Butler, was indeed, too great an adept in the knowledge of human nature, and too thoroughly versed in the whole history of mankind, not to know, as he afterwards observes, the impossibility without some miraculous interposition, that a great body of men should so unite in one nation and government, in the fear of God, and the practice of virtue; and that such a government should continue unbroken for a succession of ages; yet supposing it could be so, indeed, such, he affirms, would be the certain effect. And may we not also affirm, that even allowing for all the failings and imperfections of human nature, which the prelate has excluded from his hypothesis, would not a state really approach nearer to this supposed happiness, in proportion as it taught and practised with more sedulity the principles of religion and virtue?

We cordially agree, with the famous Cosmo di Medici that princes cannot govern their states, by 'counting a string of beads, or mumbling over paternosters.' But we are, at the same time, equally averse from the religion which assigns such practices to any class of people; and from that ignorance which would make the religion of any order of men, especially of princes, consist in mere ceremonies and observances. Charles the wise, was at least as sound a judge as Cosmo of what constituted the perfection of a royal character, when he declared, that, 'if there were no honour and virtue left in the rest of the world, the last traces of them should be found among princes.' There should indeed, be found in the royal character, an innate grandeur; a dignity of soul which should show itself under all circumstances, and shine through every cloud of trial or difficulty. It was from such inherent marks of greatness, that the infant Cyrus, exiled and unknown, was chosen king by the shepherd's children.

It would not, perhaps, be easy to cite an higher authority, on the point in question, the importance of religion to a state, than that of the great and excellent chancellor de L'Hospital. It was a common observation of his, that, 'religion had more influence upon the spirits of mankind, than all their passions put together; and that the cement, by which it united them, was infinitely stronger than all the other obligations of civil society. This was not the observation of a dreaming monk who in his cell, writes maxims for a world of which he knows nothing; but the sentiment derived from deep experience, of an illustrious statesman, whose greatness of mind, zeal, disinterestedness, and powerful talents, supported France under a succession of weak and profligate kings. Frugal for the state in times of boundless prodigality; philosophical in a period of enthusiastic fury; tolerant and candid in days of persecution, and deeply conscientious under all circumstances; worthy, in short, and it is perhaps his best eulogium, to be driven, for his virtues, by Catharine di Medici from councils, which his wisdom might have controlled; and who, on giving up the seals which she demanded, withdrew to an honourable literary retreat, with the remark, that 'the world was too depraved for him to concern himself any longer with it. These are the men whom corrupt princes drive from the direction of those states, which their wisdom might save and their virtue might reform.

* Machiavel's Discourses on Livy.

† This is only a short abstract of this fine passage, to the whole of which the reader is referred. Butler's Analogy, part first, chap. iii. p. 89, and following.

Another of the political advantages of religious rectitude in a state, is the *security* it affords. For, with whatever just severity we may reprobate the general spirit of revolution, yet, it must be confessed, that it has not, on *all* occasions, been excited by undue discontent, by unprovoked impatience, nor even by selfish personal feelings; but sometimes also from a virtuous sense of the evils of oppression and injustice; evils which honest men resent for others as well as for themselves.

Again, there is something so safe and tranquilizing in Christian piety, as we have already observed, that, though we would be far from reducing it to a cold political calculation; yet, content, submission, and obedience, make so large a practical part of religion, that wherever it is taught in the best and soundest way, it can hardly fail to promote, in the people, the ends of true policy, any more than of genuine morality.

Our wisest sovereigns, partly, perhaps for this reason, have paid the deepest attention to the moral instruction of the lower classes of their subjects. Alfred and Elizabeth,* among others, were too sound politicians to lose this powerful hold on the affections of their people. In addition to their desire to promote religion, they had no doubt discerned, that it is gross vice, that it is brutal ignorance, which leave the lower class a prey to factious innovators, and renders them the blind tools of political incendiaries. When the youth of this class are carefully instructed in religion by their rightful teachers, those teachers have the fairest opportunities of instilling into them their duty to the state, as well as to the church; and they will find that the same lessons which form good Christians, tend to make good subjects. But, without that moderate measure of sound and sober instruction, which should be judiciously adapted to their low demands, they will be likely neither to honour the king, reverence the clergy, nor obey the magistrate. While, on the contrary, by interweaving their duty to their governors, with their duty to God, they will at once be preserved from mischief in politics, and delusion in religion. The awful increase of perjury among us is of itself a loud call sedulously to pursue this object. How should those who are not early instructed in the knowledge of their Maker, fear to offend him, by that common violation of the solemnity of oaths, for which we are unhappily becoming notorious? Let us not be deemed needlessly earnest in the defence of a truth of such extreme importance.—The political value of religion never can be too firmly believed, or too carefully kept in view, in the government of nations. May it be deeply rooted in the mind of every prince, as a fundamental principle! Let it be confirmed by all the various proofs and examples, by which its truth can be established, and its authority enforced!*

But, to return.—We most readily concede, that by that exultation of a state of which Solomon speaks, is not meant, that sudden flash of temporary splendor, which is occasioned by the mutable advantages of war, the plunder of foreign countries, the acquisition of unwieldy territory, or the vertigo of domestic revolutions: but that sober and solid glory, which is the result of just laws; of agriculture, and sobriety, which promote population; of industry and commerce, which increase prosperity; of such well regulated habits in private life, as may serve to temper that prosperity, and by strict consequences, give direction and steadiness to public manners. For it never can be made a question, whether the solidity of the parts must not contribute to the firmness of the whole; and whether the virtue exercised by collective bodies, can any farther be hoped for, than as it exists in the individuals who compose them. But, on what basis can this superstructure rest, by what principle can individual virtue be either substantially promoted or lastingly secured, except by that sense of an invisible, almighty, and infinitely just, and holy Sovereign of the universe, which revelation alone has effectually disclosed to us, and reason has recognized as the essence of religion?

Far be it indeed, from us to deny, that this religious principle may not frequently oppose itself to *apparent* means of aggrandizement, both personal and national.—Doubtless it will often condemn that to which human pride would aspire. Even when an object might in itself be fairly desirable, it will forbid the pursuit, except through lawful paths. But in the severest of such restrictions, it only sacrifices what is shadowy to what is substantial, the evanescent triumphs of a day to the permanent comfort of successive generations.

But though we do not assert that national prosperity is always, and infallibly, an indication of virtue, and of the distinguishing favour of God, yet we conceive, that such outward marks of divine favour may more generally be expected, in the case of communities, than of in-

* See a letter of archbishop Whitgift to the bishops, of which the following is an extract:

'Your lordship is not ignorant, that a great part of the dissoluteness of manners, and ignorance in the common sort, that reigneth in most parts of this realm, even in this clear light of the gospel, ariseth hereof, for, that the youth, being as it were, the frie and seminary of the church and commonwealth, through negligence, both of natural and spiritual fathers, are not, as were meet, trained up in the chief and necessary principles of Christian religion, whereby they might learn their duty to their God, their prince, their country, and their neighbours; especially in their tender years, when these things might best be planted in them, and would become most hardly to be afterwards removed. This mischief might well, in mine opinion, be redressed, if that which in this behalf hath been godly and wisely provided, were as carefully called on and executed, namely, by catechizing and instructing in churches the youth of both sexes, on the Sabbath days, in the afternoon. And, that if it may be convenient, before their parents, and others of the several parishes, who thereby may take comfort and instruction also.'—Strype's Life of Whitgift.

* Mr. Addison speaks of the religious instruction of the poor as the best means of recovering the country from its degeneracy and depravation of manners. And, after drawing an animated picture of a procession of charity children on a day of thanksgiving for the triumphs obtained by the queen's arms, he adds, 'for my part, I can scarce forbear looking on the astonishing victories our arms have been crowned with, to be, in some measure, the blessings returned upon these charities; and that the great successes of the war, for which we lately offered up our thanks, were, in some measure, occasioned by the several objects (of religiously instructed children) which then stood before us.'—GUARDIAN, No. 105. *These were the sentiments of a Secretary of State!*

dividuals. In communities we see not so much the effect of each particular act of virtue, as of the generally diffused principle. Though virtue is often obstructed in labouring to obtain for itself the advantages which belong to it, this is no proof against its having a tendency to obtain them. The natural tendency indeed, being to produce happiness, though it may fail to do it in certain expected cases.

In the case, therefore, of communities and states, where the result of *many* actions, rather than the particular effect of *each*, is seen, it may not altogether unfairly be asserted, that virtue is its own reward. Perhaps it also may be affirmed, that the system of temporal rewards and punishments, which, though chiefly exemplified in the Jewish dispensation, was by no means confined to it, has not equally passed away, with respect to states and nations, as with respect to individuals. The learned Bossuet has observed, that while the New Testament manifests to us the operation of God's grace, the Old Testament exhibits to us his providential government of the world. We will not dwell on this remark further than to suggest, that even in this view the study of the Old Testament may not be without its uses, even to the modern statesman, as we know that the Jewish law has clearly been held important, by some of our wisest legislators.

On the whole, we need not hesitate to assert, that in the long course of events, nothing, that is morally wrong, can be politically right. Nothing that is inequitable, can be finally successful. Nothing, that is contrary to religion, can be ultimately favourable to civil policy. We may therefore confidently affirm, that impiety and vice, sooner or later, bring states, as well as individuals, to misery and ruin. That, though vice may sometimes contribute to temporary exaltation; in the same degree, it will, in the end, contribute to promote decay, and accelerate the inevitable period of dissolution.

Let it then be ever kept in view, that the true exaltation is, in fact, that prosperity which arises from the goodness of the laws, and the firmness and impartiality with which they are executed; which results from moderation in the government, and obedience in people; from wisdom and foresight in council, from activity and integrity in commerce, from independence of national character, from fortitude in resisting foreign attack, and zeal in promoting domestic harmony; from patience under sufferings, hardiness in danger, zeal in the love of civil, and vigour in the reprobation of savage liberty; from a spirit of fairness and liberality in making treaties, and from fidelity in observing them. Above all, from a multiplication of individual instances of family comfort and independence, from the general prevalence, throughout the great mass of the people, of habits of industry, sobriety, and good order, from the practice in short, of the social and domestic virtues; of all those relative duties and kindnesses, which give body and substance to the various charities of life, and the best feelings of our nature.

If sinful nations appear prosperous for a time, it is often because there has been some proportion of good mixed with the evil; or it is because the Providence of God means to use the temporary success of guilty nations for the accomplishment of his general scheme, or the promotion of a particular purpose, of humbling and correcting other, perhaps less guilty nations; or it is because 'the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full; and the punishment of the more corrupt states is delayed, to make their ruin more signal and tremendous, and their downfall a more portentous object, for the instruction of the world. God, without any impeachment of his moral government, may withhold retribution, because it is always in his power: he may be long-suffering, because he is everlasting. He may permit the calamity which we see, in order to extract from it the good which we see not.—He is never the author of moral evil, and the natural evil which he does authorise, is both the punishment and the corrective of the moral. Though God never intended this world for such a complete state of retribution, as entirely to hinder either vice or virtue from occasionally receiving the recompences, and the penalties due to the other; yet there is this obvious difference, between nations and individuals, that, whereas individuals the most virtuous are often the most visited with temporal misfortunes, the best governed empires are, on the whole, the most secure of prosperity. And if, in the calamities brought on corrupt states, the innocent always unavoidably suffer with the guilty, this furnishes no just charge against the equity of divine Providence, who *here* reckons tremendously with the state *as* a state, but will, separately and ultimately, reckon with every individual; and thus finally and fully vindicate his own infinite, and much calumniated justice.'*

CHAP. XIX.

Integrity the true political wisdom.

The tendency of a religious temper to exalt a prince into a hero, might be sufficiently illustrated by the single instance of Louis the ninth. It is notorious, that nothing more severely tries the character of princes as well as of individuals, than remarkable success. It was, however, in this circumstance precisely, that the prince just mentioned evinced how completely his christian temper had corrected, both the selfishness natural to man, and the arrogance habitual to prosperity.

When, under the unfortunate reign of our Henry the third, the affairs of England were reduced to a low condition, while those of France were in a highly flourishing state; Louis, in making a treaty with England, generously refused to take an unfair advantage of the misfortunes of this country, or to avail himself to the utmost of his own superiority. His concessions to the depressed enemy were liberal; and he soon after reaped the reward of his moderation, in the confidence which it inspired. Louis was chosen, both by Henry and his nobles, to settle the differences between them. In consequence

* See bishop Butler's Analogy, a work which cannot be too strongly recommended.

of the recent instance of his public integrity, the foreign adversary was invited to be the arbiter of domestic disagreements; and they were happily terminated by his decision. Let infidels remark, to the disgrace of their scepticism, that the monarch who was, perhaps, one of the greatest instances of christian piety and devotion, furnished also an example of the most striking moral rectitude!

Henry the fourth, when only king of Navarre, discovered no less integrity after his glorious victory at Coutras. Being asked what terms he would require from the king of France, after gaining such a victory, 'just the same,' replied he, 'that I should ask after losing one.'

It is, however, necessary to observe, that integrity, in order to be successful, must be uniform. Truth, for example, occasionally spoken, may not afford to the speaker any part of the profit which attends the regular observance of truth. The error of corrupt politicians consists much in treating each question, as if it were an insulated case, and then arguing, perhaps not unjustly, that the practice of virtue, in this or that particular instance, will not be productive of good; forgetting that if, in all instances, they would be virtuous, they would then most probably obtain the success and full reward of virtue.

We know that even in that particular branch of political transactions, the diplomatic, wherein the strongest temptations to dissimulation, and chicanery are held forth to little minds, some of the most able and successful negotiators have generously disdained the use of any such mean expedients. The frankness and integrity of Temple and De Witt are not more esteemed by the moralist for their probity, than by the statesman for their true wisdom. What can there be, indeed, so different between the situation of two public men, who on the part of their several countries respectively, are negotiating on questions of policy or commerce; and that of two private men who are treating on some business of ordinary life, which should render impolitic, in the public concern, that honesty which, in the private, is so universally acknowledged to be the best policy, as to have grown into an adage of universal and unqualified acceptance. Indeed, as the adage may refer to what is truly politic in the long run, and with a view to general consequences, we might rather expect, that fraud would be admissible into the transactions of private men, whose short span of life might not be likely to be more than counterbalanced by future loss rather than in the concerns of states, which, by containing a long continued existence, a political identity, under all the successive generations of the members of which they are composed, may pay, and pay perhaps severely too, in later times, the price of former acts of fraud and treachery.—Again, in public, no less than in private business, will not any one find the benefit of employing an agent, who possesses a high character for probity and honour? Will not larger and more liberal concessions be made to him who may be safely relied on for paying their equivalent? Once more, how often are public wars, as well as private differences, produced or fermented by mutual distrust! and how surely would a confidence in each other's trust and honesty tend to the restoration of peace and harmony! Even the wily Florentine* allows, that it is advantageous to have a high character for truth and uprightness. And how can this character be in any way so well obtained as by deserving it? It is the disgrace of nations, that in their diplomatic concerns, the maxims of solid wisdom have not been always observed.

Without going the length of admitting the truth of Sir Henry Wotton's light definition of the duties of an ambassador, is it not too often assumed, that the laws which bind private men, and which would doubtless bind the individual minister himself, in his private concerns, may occasionally be dispensed with, in the administration of public affairs; and that strict truth, for instance, which in the ordinary transactions of life is allowed to be indispensable, is too frequently considered as impracticable in diplomatic negotiations?

Don Louis De Haro, the Spanish minister, at the treaty of the Pyrennees, seems to have entertained just views of the value of simple integrity in politicians, for speaking of cardinal Mazarin, with whom he was negotiating, he said, 'that man always pursued one great error in politics, he would always deceive.' Mazarin was a deep dissembler and a narrow genius;† so true it is that vanity and short-sightedness are commonly at the bottom of dissimulation, though it be practised from a totally opposite idea; worldly politicians frequently falling into the error of fancying, that craft and circumvention are indications of genius; while, in reality, suspicion is the wisdom of a little mind, and distrust the mean and inefficient substitute for the penetration of a great one. Many, says lord Bacon, who know how to pack the cards, cannot play them well. Many who can manage canvasses and factions, are yet not wise men. Considering the credit which sincerity stamps on a political character, it is so far from being opposed to discretion, that it constitutes the best part of it. True rectitude neither implies nor requires imprudence; while it costs a politician as much trouble to maintain the reputation of a quality which he has not, as it would really cost him to acquire it. The mazes and windings, the doublings and intricacies of intriguing spirits, ultimately mislead them from the end they pursue. They excite jealousy, they rouse resentment, they confirm suspicion, they strengthen prejudices, they foment differences; and thus call into action a number of passions, which commonly oppose themselves to the accomplishment of their designs. Politicians therefore would do well to remember the remark of the learned Barrow, who was as great a proficient in mathematics, as in morality, that 'the straightest line is always the shortest line, in morals as well as in geometry.' When the cha-

* Machiavel.

† Mazarin himself had spread his own maxims to such good purpose, that one of his creatures whom he intended to send to negotiate with the duke of Savoy, implored his eminence not to insist on his deceiving the duke *just at that time*, as the business was but a trifle; because he thought it would answer better to reserve the sacrifice of his reputation for deceiving, till some more important object was at stake.

racter of integrity is once lost, falsehood itself loses all its uses. The known dissembler is suspected of insincerity even when he does not practise it, and is no longer trusted, though he may happen to deserve to be so.

The character of lord Sunderland presents a striking instance of the political inefficacy of duplicity. His superior genius, so admirably qualified for business, availed him but little in securing the public esteem when it was observed, that of three successive princes, who severally set out with a view to establish different interests, he gained the favour of all, by adopting the system of each, with the same accommodating veracity. His reputation for honesty sunk, and he ceased to be trusted in the degree in which he came to be known.

We sometimes hear the more decent politicians, who sanction the appearance, and commend the outward observances of religion lament that religion does not produce any great effects upon society. And they are right, if by religion they mean that shell and surface, which merely serve to save appearances. But, is it not to be feared, that these very politicians sometimes disbelieve the reality, and the power of that religion, the exterior of which they allow to be decorous? Yet, this reality and power, believed and acted upon, would certainly produce more substantial effects than can ever *rationally* be expected from mere forms and shadows. These sage persons frequently lament the deficiency of morals in society, but never the want of religion in the heart. Though, to expect that morality to be firm, which stands on no religious foundation, is to expect stability from an inverted pyramid.

Besides, it is infinitely laborious to maintain an undeviating course of dissimulation, a moment's intermission of which may defeat the policy of years. Yet, this unremitting attention, this wearying watchfulness, is essential to that worldly policy, of which South says, that 'folly being the superstructure, it is but reason, that the foundation should be falsity. The same acute judge of mankind observes, that the designing politicians of the party he was combating, seemed to act as if they thought 'that speech was given to ordinary men to communicate their mind, but to wise men for concealing it.'

The dissembler should also remember, that however deeply interest and industry enable him to lay his plans, the interest and industry of others will be equally at work to detect them. Besides, the deepest politician can carry on no great schemes alone, and as all association depends on opinion, few will lend their aid, or commit their safety to one whose general want of probity forbids the hope of perpetual confidence, or of permanent security.

Why do many politicians fail finally of the full accomplishment of their object? Not for want of genius to lay a plausible plan; not for want of judgment to seize the most favourable occasions; not for want of due contempt of conscientious scruples in pushing those occasions; not for want of fearless impiety in giving full scope to their designs; but from that ever wakeful Providence, which if he does not dash their projects before they are acted, defeats the main intention afterwards.—Even the successful usurper, Cromwell, lost the confidence of his army, when they found in the sequel, that he meant to place himself on the very throne which he had made them believe it was his great object to abolish. Nor was he ever able to adorn his own brows with that crown, for the hope of which he had waded through a sea of crimes. The very means employed by Alexander the sixth, and Cæsar Borgia, to destroy the cardinals, rebounded on themselves, and both were poisoned by the very wine which they had prepared for the destruction of their guests.

It is, therefore, the only safety, and the only wisdom, and the only sure, unfading prudence, instead of pursuing our own devious paths, to commit our concerns to God; to walk in his straight ways, and obey his plain commands. For, after all, the widest sphere of a mere worldly politician is but narrow. The wisdom of this world is bounded by this world, the dimensions of which are so contracted, and its duration so short, in the eye of true philosophy, as to strip it of all real grandeur. All the enjoyments of this world, says the eloquent South, are much too short for an immortal soul to stretch itself upon: a soul which shall persist in being, not only when honour and fame, but when time itself shall cease to be. The deepest worldly projector, with the widest views, and the strongest energies, even when flushed with success, must, if his mind has never learned to shoot forward into the boundless eternity of an unseen world, feel his genius cramped, his wing flag, and his spirit at a stand. There seems to have been a spark of the immortal fire even in the regrets of Alexander. It is probable he would not have wept, because he had no more worlds to conquer, had he not deeply felt the sting of disappointment at finding no joy in having conquered this, and thence inferred a kind of vague and shapeless idea of another. There will be always too vast a disproportion between the appetites and enjoyments of the ambitious to admit of their being happy. Nothing can fill the desires of a great soul, but what he is persuaded will last as long as he himself shall last.

To worldly minds it would sound paradoxical to assert that ambition is a *little* passion. To affirm that if really great views, and truly enlarged notions were impressed upon the soul, they would be so far from promoting that they would cure this passion. The excellent bishop Berkeley, beholding the ravages which ambition had made in his time in France, could not help wishing that its encroaching monarch had been bred to the study of astronomy, that he might learn from thence how mean and little that ambition is which terminates in a small part of what is of itself but a point, compared with that part of the universe which lies within our view.

But, if astronomy shows the diminutiveness of that globe, for a very small portion of which kings contend, in comparison with the universe, how much nobler a cure does Christianity provide for ambition, by showing that not this globe only, but the whole universe also,

> Yea, all that it inherits shall dissolve;

by reminding the ambitious of the utter in-

sufficiency to true glory or real happiness of all that has been created, of all that shall have an end; by carrying on their views to that invisible, eternal world, which to us shall then emphatically begin to be, when all which we behold shall be no more.

He, therefore, is the only true politician who uniformly makes the eternal laws of truth and rectitude, as revealed from heaven the standard of his actions, and the measure of his ambition. 'To do justly,' is peculiarly the high and holy vocation of a prince. And both princes and politicians would do well to inquire, not only whether their scheme was planned with sagacity, and executed with spirit, but whether they have so conducted it, as to leave proper room, if we may so speak, for the favourable interference of God; whether they have supplicated his blessing; and given to him the glory of its happy issue? Perhaps more well-meant endeavours fail through neglect in these respects, particularly of fervent prayer for success, than through any deficiency in the wisdom of the plan itself. But because under a fanatic usurpation, in the seventeenth century, hypocrites abused this duty, and degraded its sanctity, by what they profanely called *seeking the Lord;* the friends of the restored constitution too generally took up the notion, that irreligion was a proof of sincerity, and that the surest way to avoid the hypocrisy, was to omit the duty.

We cannot too strongly censure that most mistaken practice, which, at the period before mentioned, reduced the language of Scripture to that of common conversation; nor too warmly condemn that false taste, which, by quaint allusions, forced conceits, and strained allegories, wrested the Bible to every ordinary purpose, and debased its dignity, by this colloquial familiarity. But is there no danger of falling into the opposite error? If some have unseasonably forced it into the service, on occasions to which it could never apply; may not others acquire the habit of thinking it seasonable on no occasion at all?

Again—how strangely do we overlook the consummate wisdom, as well as goodness of God, in having made that practice of prayer the instrument of obtaining his blessing, which is so powerfully operative in purifying and elevat- our own hearts. Politicians, with all their sagacity, would do well to learn, that it is likewise one of the many beneficial effects of prayer, that it not only reasonably increases our hopes of success, but teaches us to acquiesce in disappointment. They should learn also, not to wonder, if God refuses to answer those prayers, which are *occasionally* put up on great public emergencies, when those who offer them do not live in the exercise of habitual devotion. They should take it as an axiom of good experience from the incomparable Hooker, that 'All things religiously begun are prosperously ended; because whether men, in the end, have that which religion allowed them to desire, or that which it teacheth them contentedly to suffer, they are, in neither event, unfortunate.'

Nor will a truly pious prince ever be eventually defeated in his designs; he may not indeed be successful in every negotiation, he may not be victorious in every battle; yet in his leading purpose he will never be disappointed. For his ultimate end was to act conscientiously, to procure the favour of God, to advance the best interests of his people, and to secure his own eternal happiness.—Whatever the event may be to others, to himself it must be finally good. *The effect of righteousness is peace. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.* And, to conclude in the words of the able and profound Barrow—'If God shall not cease to be; if he will not let go the reins; if his word cannot deceive; if the wisest men are not infatuated; if the common sense of mankind is not extravagant; if the main props of life, if the great pillars of society do not fail;—he that walketh uprightly doth proceed on sure grounds.'

CHAP. XX.

On the true arts of Popularity.

Cicero says, 'that it is the property of justice not to injure men, and of politeness not to offend them.' True Christianity not only unites, but perfects both these qualities; and renders them, thus associated and exalted, powerful instruments, especially in princes, for the acquisition of popularity.

The desire of praise and reputation is commonly the first motive of action in second rate, and a secondary motive in first rate characters. That, in the former case, men who are not governed by a higher principle, are often so keenly alive to human opinion, as to be restrained by it from such vices as would disturb the peace of society, is an instance of the useful provision made by the great Governor of all things for the good order of the world.

But in princes, none of whose actions are indifferent, who are 'the observed of all observers,' reputation cannot be too highly prized. A negligence respecting public opinion, or a contempt for the judgment of posterity, would be inexcusable in those, whose conduct must, in no inconsiderable degree, give, in their own time, the law to manners, and whose example will hereafter be adduced, by future historians, either to illustrate virtue, or to exemplify vice, and to stimulate the good or evil, monarchs yet unborn.

'A prince,' however, as a late eloquent statesman* observed in his own case, 'should love that fame which follows, not that which is pursued.' He should bear in mind, that shadows owe their being to substances; that true fame derives its existence from something more solid than itself; that reputation is not the precursor, nor the cause, but the fruit and effect of merit.

But though, in superficial characters, the hunger of popularity is the mainspring of action: and though the vain-glorious too often obtain, what they so sedulously seek, the acclama-

* The first earl of Mansfield.

tions of the vulgar; yet a temperate desire to be loved and esteemed is so far from being a proof of vanity, that it even indicates the contrary propensity: for reasonably to wish for the good opinion of others, evinces that a man does not overvalue and sit down contented with his own. It is an over estimation of himself, an undue complacency in his own merit, which is one of the causes of his disdain of public opinion. In profligate characters, another cause is, that, anticipating the contempt which they must be aware, they have deserved, they are willing to be beforehand with the world in proclaiming their disdain of that reputation which they know that their course of life has made unattainable.

Pagan philosophy, indeed, overrated *the honour which cometh from man.* But even the sacred scripture, which, as it is the only true fountain, is also the only just standard of all excellence, does not teach us to despise, but only not to set an undue value upon it. It teaches us to estimate this honour in its due order and just measure; and above all, it exhorts us to see that it be sought on right grounds; to take care that it tempt not to vanity, by exciting to trifling pursuits; nor to vice, by stimulating to such as are base; nor to false honour, by seeking it in the paths of ambition. A prince must not be inordinate in the desire, nor irregular in the pursuit, nor immoderate in the enjoyment, nor criminally solicitous for the preservation of fame; but he must win it fairly, and wear it temperately. He should pursue it not as the ultimate end of life, but as an object, which, by making the life honourable makes it useful. It must not, however, be omitted that the scriptures exhort, that when reputation can only be attained or preserved by the sacrifice of duty, it must then be renounced; that we must submit to the loss even of this precious jewel, rather than by retaining it, wound the conscience, or offend God. Happily, however, in a country in which religion and laws are established on so firm a basis, a prince is little likely to be called to such an absolute renunciation, though he may be called to many trials.

But all these dangers being provided for, and all abuses guarded against, the word of God does not scruple to pronounce reputation to be a valuable possession. In a competition with *riches*, the pre-eminence is assigned to a *good name*; and *wisdom*, that is, Religion in the bold language of eastern imagery, is described as bearing *honour* in her left hand. Nor has the sacred volume been altogether silent, respecting even that posthumous renown which good princes may expect in history. That *the memory of the just shall be blessed*, was the promise of one who was himself both an author and a monarch. And that *the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance*, was the declaration of another royal author.*

A desire of popularity is still more honest in princes than in other men. And when the end for which it is sought, and the means by which it is pursued are strictly just, the desire is not only blameless, but highly laudable. Nor is it ever censurable, except where the affection of the people is sought, by plausible means, for pernicious purposes. On the part of the people attachment is a natural feeling, which nothing but persevering misconduct in their rulers can ever wear out. A prince should learn not to listen to those flatterers who would keep him ignorant of the public opinion. The discontents of the people should not be stifled before they reach the royal ear; nor should their affection be represented as a fund which can never be drained. It is a rich and precious stock, which should not be too often drawn upon. Imprudence will diminish, oppression will exhaust it. A prince should never measure his rights over a people by the greatness of their attachment; the warmth of their zeal being a call for his kindness, not a signal for his exactions. Improvident rigour would wear out that affection, which justice would increase, and consideration confirm.

Britons, in general, possess that *obsequium erga reges*, which Tacitus ascribes to the Swedes. While they passionately love liberty, they also patiently bear those reasonable burdens which are necessary in order to preserve it. But this character of our countrymen seems not to have been so well understood, at least not so fairly represented, by one of their own sovereigns, as by a foreigner and an enemy. The unfortunate James calls them 'a fickle, giddy, and rebellious people.' If the charge were true, he and his family rather made, than found them such. Agricola had pronounced them to be a people, 'who cheerfully complied with the levies of men, and the imposition of taxes, and with all the duties enjoined by government, provided they met with just and lawful treatment from their governors.'—'Nor have the Romans,' continues he, 'any farther conquered them, than only to form them to obedience. *They never will submit to be slaves.*'* It is pleasant to behold the freest of nations, even now, acting up the character given them by the first of historians, on such unquestionable authority as that of their illustrious invader, near two thousand years ago.

Even the fatal catastrophe of Charles I. was not a national act, but the act of a fanatical party. The kingdom at large beheld the deed with deep abhorrence, and deplored it with unfeigned sorrow. The fascinating manners of his son and successor so won the hearts of every one who approached him, that it required all his vices to alienate them. If that gracious outward deportment was of so much use to him, in veiling for a time the most corrupt designs, how essentially must it serve a prince who meditates only such as are beneficial! William was not so happy as to find out this secret. Satisfied with having saved the country, he forgot that it was important to please it; and he in some measure lost, by his forbidding manners, and his neglect of studying our national character, the hearts of a people who owed him their best blessings.

——Charles, the abject tool of France,
Came back to smile his subjects into slaves,
While Belgic William, with his warrior frown,
Coldly declared them free.

The charming frankness and noble simplicity

* See an admirable sermon of Dr. Barrow, on the reward of honouring God.

* Tacitus's life of Agricola.

of manners which distinguished Henry IV. of France, gained the affections of his subjects more than all the refinements of artifice could have done. He had established such a reputation for sincerity, that when, on a certain occasion, he offered hostages to his mortal enemies the Spartans, they refused to accept them, and would only take his *word*. He frequently declared, that he would lose his crown rather than give, even to his worst foe, the least suspicion of his fidelity to his engagements. So happily infectious is this principle in a king, that not only Sully, but his other minister, Jeannin, was distinguished by the same strict regard to truth; and the popularity both of the king and his ministers was proportionably great.

The only way then for a prince to secure the affection of the people, is to deserve it; by letting them see that he is steadily consulting their interests, and invariably maintaining them. What but this so long preserved to Elizabeth, that rooted regard in the hearts of her subjects? Certainly no pliancy of manners, no gracious complaisance. She treated even her parliaments in so peremptory a manner, that they sometimes only bore with it from a thorough conviction that the interests of the country were secure in her hands, and its happiness as dear to her as her own.* These are the true foundations of popularity. He, who most consults the good of his people, will, in general, be most trusted by them; he who best merits their affection, will be most sure to obtain it, in spite of the arts of a cabal, or the turbulence of a faction.

Pagan fable relates, that when the inferior gods had once formed a conspiracy to bind Jupiter, Minerva advised him to send for Briareus, the monster with the hundred hands, to come to his assistance; the poets, doubtless, intimating by this fiction, that wisdom will always suggest to a prince, that his best security will ever be found in the ready attachment and assistance of the people. And it was a good practice which the famous Florentine secretary† records of the then king of France, that he would never allow any person to say, that *he was of the king's party*, which would always imply that there was another party against him; whereas the king prudently desired not to have it thought that there were any parties at all. And, indeed, wise sovereigns will study carefully to repress all narrowing terms, and dividing ideas. Of such sovereigns *the people are the party*.

Princes will have read history with little attention if they do not learn from it, that their own true greatness is so closely connected with the happiness of their subjects, as to be inseparable from it. There they will see that while great schemes of conquest have always been productive of extreme suffering to the human race, in their execution, they have often led to ultimate dishonour and ruin to the monarchs themselves. Herein a pious mind will recognise the goodness of the Almighty, which, notwithstanding the temptations and impediments that, in this probationary state, obstruct the progress and render difficult the practice of virtue in private life, has yet held out to those, who are endowed with kingly power, a strong inducement to use it for the promotion of their people's happiness, by rendering such designs as tend to the gratification of many vicious appetites which they are most tempted to indulge, far more difficult of execution, than such as are prompted by benevolent emotions, and have in view the advancement of civil and social happiness.

Thus, projects of conquest and ambition are circumscribed and obstructed by a thousand inherent and unavoidable difficulties. They are often dependent for their success on the life of a single man, whose death perhaps when least expected, at once disconcerts them. Often they depend on what is still more uncertain,—the caprice or humour of an individual. When all is conceived to be flourishing and successful, when the prosperous enterpriser fancies that he is on the very point of gaining the proud summit to which he has so long aspired; or at the very moment when it is attained, and he is exulting in the hope of immediate enjoyment,—at once he is dashed to the ground, his triumphs are defeated, his laurels are blasted, and he himself only remains,

To point a moral, or adorn a tale,

a lasting monument of the folly of ambition, and of the uncertainty of all projects of worldly grandeur.

But the monarch, on the contrary, whose nobler and more virtuous ambition prompts him to employ his superior power of promoting the internal prosperity and comforts of his subjects, is not liable to such defeats. His path is plain; his duty is clear. By a vigilant, prompt, and impartial administration of justice, his object is to secure to the industrious the enjoyment of their honest gains; by a judicious use of his supreme power, to remove difficulties and obstructions, out of the way of commercial enterprise, and to facilitate its progress; to reward and foster ingenuity; and to encourage and promote the various arts by which civilized societies are distinguished and embellished; above all, to countenance and favour religion, morality, good order, and all the social and domestic virtues. A monarch, who makes these benevolent ends the objects of his pursuit, will not so easily be disappointed. The reason is obvious; nothing depends on a single individual. His plans are carrying on through ten thousand channels, and by ten thousand agents, who, while they are all labouring for the promotion of their own peculiar object, are, at the same time, unconsciously performing their function in the great machine of civil society. It is not, if we may change the metaphor, a single plant, perhaps an exotic, in a churlish climate, and an unwilling soil, which raised with anxious care, a sudden frost may nip, or a sudden blight may wither; but it is the wide-spread vegetation of the meadow, which abundantly springs up in one unvaried face of verdure, beauty and utility. While the happy monarch, whose large and liberal mind has pro-

* 'You have lived,' says Lord Thomas Howard to his friend in James I.'s reign, 'to see the trim of old times, and what passed in the queen's days. These things are no more the same; your queen did not talk of her subjects' love and good affections, and in good truth she aimed well: our king talketh of his subjects' fear and subjection, &c. &c.

† Machiavel.

jected and promoted this scene of peaceful industry, has the satisfaction of witnessing the gradual diffusion of comfort; of comfort which, enlarging with the progress of his plans to their full establishment has been completed; not like the successful projects of triumphant ambition, in the oppression and misery of subjugated slaves, but in the freedom and happiness of a contented people.

To the above important objects of royal attention, such a sovereign as we are contemplating, will naturally add a disposition for the promotion of charitable and religious institutions, as well as of those whose more immediate object is political utility, proportioning, with a judicious discrimination, the measure of support, and countenance, to the respective degree of excellence. To these will be superadded a beneficent patronage to men of genius, learning, and science. Royal patronage will be likely not only to contribute to the carrying of talents into beneficial channels, but may be the means of preventing them from being diverted into such as are dangerous. And when it is received as an universally established principle, that the direction of the best abilities to none but the soundest purposes, is the way to insure the favour of the prince, it will be an additional spur to genius to turn its efforts to the promotion of virtue and of public utility.—Such are the views, such the exertions, such the felicities of a patriot king, of a Christian politician.

CHAP. XXI.

The importance of royal example in promoting loyalty.—On false patriotism.—Public spirit.

A WISE prince will be virtuous, were it only through policy. The measure of his power is the rule of his duty. He who practises virtue and piety himself, not only holds out a broad shelter to the piety and virtue of others, but his example is a living law, efficacious to many of those who would treat written laws with contempt. The good conduct of the prince will make others virtuous; and the virtuous are always the peaceable. It is the voluptuous, the prodigal, and the licentious, who are the needy, the unsettled, and the discontented, who love change and promote disturbance. If sometimes the affluent, and the independent, swell the catalogue of public disturbers, they will frequently be found to be men of inferior abilities, used by the designing as necessary implements to accomplish their work. The one set furnish mischief, the other means. Sallust has, in four exquisitely chosen words, given, in the character of one innovator, that of almost the whole tribe, *Alieni appetens, sui profusus.* But allegiance is the fruit of sober integrity; and fidelity grows on the stock of independent honesty. As there is little public honour, where there is little private principle; so it is to be feared there will be little private principle, at least among young persons of rank, where the throne holds out the example of a contrary conduct.

It is true, that public virtue and public spirit are things, which all men, of all parties, and all characters, equally agree to extol, equally desire to have the credit of possessing. The reputation of patriotism is eagerly coveted by the most opposite characters; and pursued by the most contradictory means; by those who sedulously support the throne and constitution, and by those who labour no less sedulously to subvert them. Even the most factious, those who are governed by the basest selfishness, aspire to the dignity of a character, against which their leading principle and their actual practice constantly militate.

But patriots of this stamp are chiefly on the watch to exemplify their public spirit in their own restless way; they are anxiously looking out for some probable occurrence, which may draw them into notice, and are more eager to fish for fame, in the troubled waters of public commotion, than disposed to live in the quiet exercise of those habitual virtues, which, if general, would preclude the possibility of any commotion at all. These innovating reformers always affect to suppose more virtue in mankind, than they know they shall find, while their own practice commonly exhibits a low standard of that imaginary perfection on which their fallacious reasonings are grounded. There is scarcely any disposition which leads to this factious spirit more than a restless vanity, because it is a temper which induces a man to be making a continual comparison of himself with others. His sense of his own superior merit and inferior fortune, will fill his mind with perpetual competition with the inferior merit and superior fortune of those above him. He will ever prefer a storm in which he may become conspicuous, to a calm in which he is already secure. Such a soidisant patriot does not feel for the general interests of his country, but only for that portion of it which he himself may have a chance of obtaining. Though a loud declaimer for the privileges of universal man, he really sees no part of the whole circle of human happiness, except that segment which he is carving for himself. He does not rejoice in those plentiful dews of heaven which are fertilizing the general soil, but in those which fatten his own pastures. It is not,' says the admirable South, 'from the common, but the inclosure, from which he calculates his advantages.'

But true public spirit is not the new-born offspring of sudden occasion, nor the incidental fruit of casual emergency, nor the golden apple thrown out to contentious ambition. It is that genuine patriotism, which best prevents disturbance, by discouraging every vice that leads to it. It springs from a combination of disinterestedness, integrity, and content. It is the result of many long cherished domestic charities. Its seminal principles exist in a sober love of liberty, order, law, peace, and justice, the best safeguards of the throne, and the only happiness of the people. Instead of that selfish patriotism which, in ancient Rome, consisted in subverting the comfort of the rest of the world, the public spirit of a British patriot is not only consistent with Christianity, but (maugre the assertion of a wit already quoted)* in a good degree dictated

* Soame Jenyns.

by it. His religion, so far from forbidding, even enjoins him to consider himself as such a member of the body politic, such a joint of the great machine, that, remembering the defect of a pin may disconcert a system, he labours to fill up his individual part as assiduously as if the motion of every wheel, the effect of every spring, the success of the whole operation, the safety of the entire community depended on his single conduct. This patriotism evinces itself by sacrifices in the rich, by submission in the poor, by exertions in the able, strong in their energy, but quiet in their operation; it evinces itself by the sober satisfaction of each in cheerfully filling the station which is assigned him by Providence, instead of aspiring to that which is pointed out by ambition, by each man performing with conscientious strictness his own proper duty, instead of descanting with misleading plausibility, and unprofitable eloquence on the duties of other men.

CHAP. XXII.

On the graces of deportment.—The dispositions necessary for business.—Habits of domestic life.

'Those,' says lord Bacon, 'who are accomplished in the forms of urbanity, are apt to please themselves in it so much as seldom to aspire to higher virtue.' Notwithstanding the general truth of the maxim, and the high authority by which it comes recommended, yet condescending and gracious manners should have their full share in finishing the royal character; but they should have only their *due* share. They should never be resorted to as a substitute for that worth, of which they are the best decoration. In all the graces of deportment, whatever appears outwardly engaging, should always proceed from something deeper than itself.—The fair fabric, which is seen, must be supported by a solid foundation which is out of sight; the loftiest pyramid must rise from the broadest base; the most beautiful flower from the most valuable root; sweetness of manners must be the effect of benevolence of heart; affability of speech should proceed from a well regulated temper; a solicitude to oblige should spring from an inward sense of the duty owing to our fellow-creatures; the bounty of the hands must result from the feelings of the heart; the proprieties of conversation, from a sound internal principle; kindness, attention, and all the outward graces, should be the effect of habit and dispositions lying in the mind, and ready to show themselves in action, whenever the occasion presents itself.

Just views of herself, and of what she owes to the world, of that gentleness which Christianity inculcates, and that graciousness which her station enjoins, will, taking the usual advantages into the account, scarcely fail to produce in the royal pupil a deportment, at once dignified and engaging. The firmest substances alone are susceptible of the most exquisite polish, while the meanest materials will admit of being varnished. True fine breeding never betrays any tincture of that vanity, which is the effect of a mind struggling to conceal its faults; nor of that pride, which is not conscious of possessing any. This genuine politeness resulting from illustrious birth, inherent sense, and implanted virtue, will render superfluous the documents of Chesterfield, and the instructions of Castiglione.

But the acquisition of engaging manners, and all the captivating graces of deportment, need less occupy the mind of the royal person, as she will acquire these attractions by a sort of instinct, almost without time or pains. They will naturally be copied from those illustrious examples of grace, ease, and condescending dignity, which fill, and which surround the throne. And she will have the less occasion for looking to remote, or foreign examples, to learn the true arts of popularity, while the illustrious personage who wears the crown, continues to exhibit not only a living pattern by what honest means the warm affections of a people are won, but by what rectitude, piety, and patriotism, they may be preserved, and increased, under every succession of trial, and every vicissitude of circumstance.

Among the habits which it is important for a prince to acquire, there is not one more essential than a love of business.—Lord Bacon has, among his essays, an admirable chapter, both of counsel and caution, respecting despatch in affairs, which as it is short and pointed, the royal pupil might commit to memory. He advises to measure despatch not by the time of sitting to business, but by the advancement of the business itself: and reprobates the affectation of those, who, 'to gain the reputation of men of despatch, are only anxious for the credit of having done a great deal in a little time; and who abbreviate, not by contracting, but by cutting off.'—On the other hand, procrastination wears out time, and accomplishes nothing. Indistinctness also in the framing of ideas, and confusion in the disorderly disposition of them, perplex business as much as irresolution impedes it. Julius Cæsar was a model in this respect; with all his turbulence of ambition, with all his eagerness of enterprise, with all his celerity of despatch, his judgment uniformly appears to have been cool and serene; and even in the midst of the most complicated transactions, no perplexity is ever manifest in his conduct, no entanglement in his thoughts, no confusion in his expressions. Hence, we cannot but infer, that an unambiguous clearness in the planning of affairs, a lucid order in arranging, and a persevering but not precipitate, despatch in conducting them, are the unequivocal marks of a superior mind.

Yet though distribution, order, and arrangement, are the soul of business, even these must not be too minute, 'for he that does not divide,' says the great authority above cited, 'will never enter clearly into business, and he who divides too much, will not come out of it clearly.'

A prince should come to the transaction of business, with a prepared, but not with a prejudiced mind: and the mind which is best furnished for the concern which it is about to investigate, while it will be least liable to be drawn

aside by persuasion, will be most open to truth, and most disposed to yield to conviction, because it will have already weighed the arguments, and balanced the difficulties.

A great statesman of that nation to which we are rather apt to ascribe steadiness than rapidity, has bequeathed a valuable lesson to princes for the despatch of business. It is well known that De Wit assigned as the chief reason why he had himself been enabled to prosecute such a multiplicity of concerns so easily was, *by always doing one thing at a time.*

It is therefore important, not only fully to possess the mind with the affair which is under consideration, but to bestow on it an undivided attention, an application which cannot be diverted by irrelevant or inferior objects; and to possess a firmness which cannot be shaken from its purpose by art or flattery; cautions the more necessary, as we are assured by a penetrating observer, that even the strong mind of Elizabeth was not always proof against such attacks. One of the secretaries of this great queen never came to her to sign bills, that he did not first take care to engage her in deep discourse about other weighty business, that, by thus pre-occupying her mind, he might draw off her attention from the bills to which he wanted her signature.

For the private habits of life, and propriety of conduct to those around her, queen Mary, as described by bishop Burnet[a] and Fowler, seems to have been a model. Her goodness was the most unostentatious, her gentleness the most unaffected, her piety the most inwoven into her habits, her charity the best principled, and her generosity the most discriminating! Vanity and self-love seem to have been not merely outwardly repressed from a sense of decorum, but to have been inwardly extinguished; and she did not want the veil of art to conceal faults which were not working within. She seems to have united consummate discretion, with the most conscientious sincerity. She could deny, says her admiring biographer, the most earnest solicitations, with a true firmness, when she thought the person for whom they were made did not merit them. She possessed one quality of peculiar value in her station, a gentle, but effectual method of discouraging calumny. If any indulged a spirit of censoriousness in her presence, continues he, she would ask them if they have read archbishop Tillotson's sermon on evil-speaking? or give them some other pointed, but delicate reproof.

Princes should never forget, that where sincerity is expected, freedom must be allowed; and, that they who show themselves displeased at truth, must not be surprised if they never hear it. In all their intercourse, they should not only be habituated to expect from others, but to practise themselves, the most simple veracity; they should no more employ flattery, than exact it. It will be necessary for them to bear in mind, that such is the selfishness of the human heart, that we are not disinterested in our very praises; and that, in excessive commendation, we commonly consider ourselves the more than the person we commend. It is often rather a disguised effect of our own vanity, than any real admiration of the person we extol. That flattery which appears so liberal is in fact, one of the secret artifices of self-love; it looks generous, but it is in reality covetous; and praise is not so much a free gift, as a mercenary commerce, for which we hope to receive, in return, more than an equivalent.

Is there not something far more cunning than noble, in that popular art, which Pliny recommends, 'to be liberal of praise to another for any thing in which you yourself excel?'—The motive is surely selfish, that whether you deserve it or not, you may thus either way, be certain of securing the superiority to yourself. —If censure wants the tenderness of charity to make it useful, praise requires the modesty of truth, and the sanctity of justice to render it safe. It is observable, that in the sacred Scripture, which we should do well always to consult as our model, though there is sometimes simple commendation, yet there is no excessive praise, nor even the slightest tincture of exaggeration.

But there is a fault, the direct opposite to flattery, which should with equal vigilance be guarded against. There is nothing which more effectually weans attachment, and obstructs popularity, than the indulgence of intemperate speech, and petulent wit. And they who in very exalted stations, unfortunately feel a propensity to impetuosity or sarcasm, would do well, if they will not repress the feeling (which would be the shortest way) not to let it break out in pointed sentences, or cutting sayings, sharp enough to give pain, and short enough to be remembered. It has this double disadvantage, every wound made by a royal hand is mortal to the feelings of those on whom it is inflicted; and every heart which is thus wounded is alienated. Besides, it is an evil, which gathers strength by going.' The sayings of princes are always repeated, and they are not always repeated faithfully. Lord Bacon records several instances of sovereigns who ruined themselves by this sententious indiscretion. The mischief of concise sayings, he observes, is that 'they are darts, supposed to be shot from their secret intentions, while long discourses are flat, less noticed, and little remembered.'

CHAP. XXIII

On the choice of society.—Sincerity the bond of familiar intercourse.—Liberality.—Instances of ingratitude in princes.—On raising the tone of conversation—and of manners.

Princes can never fall into a more fatal error, than when, in mixing with dishonourable society, they fancy, either that their choice can confirm merit, or their presence compensate for the want of it. It is, however, sometimes very difficult for them to discover the real character of those around them, because there may be a kind of conspiracy to keep them in the dark. But there is one principle of selection, which will in general direct them well, in the choice

[a] See especially bishop Burnet's essay on queen Mary

of their companions, that of choosing persons, who, in their ordinary habits, and in selecting the companions of their own hours of relaxation, show their regard for morality and virtue. From such men as these, princes may more reasonably expect to hear the language of truth. Such persons will not be naturally led to connive at the vices of their master, in order to justify their own; they have no interest in being dishonest.

The people are not unnaturally led to form their judgment of the real principles and character of the prince, from the conduct and manners of his companions and favourites. Were not the subjects of the unhappy Charles I. in some degree excusable for not doing full justice to the piety and moral worth, which really belonged to his character, when they saw that those who were his most strenuous advocates, were, in general, avowedly profligate and profane?—If a monarch have the especial happiness of possessing a friend, let him be valued as the most precious of all his possessions. Let him be encouraged to discharge the best office of friendship, by finding, that the frankest reproofs, instead of generating a formality too fatally indicative of decaying affection, are productive, even when they may be conceived to be misplaced, of warmer returns of cordiality.

But kings, whether actual or expectant, must not hope, in general, to find this honest frankness. They must not expect to have their opinions controverted, or their errors exposed directly or openly. They should, therefore accustom themselves to hear and understand the still small voice, in which any disapprobation will be likely to be conveyed; they should use themselves to catch a hint, and to profit from an analogy: they should be on the watch to discover the sense which is entertained of their own principles or conduct, by observing the language which is used concerning similar principles and conduct in others. They must consider themselves as lying under special disadvantages, in respect to the discovery of truth, wherever they are themselves concerned; and must, therefore, strive to come possessed of it, with proportionate diligence and caution.

If an insinuating favourite find it more advantageous to himself to flatter than to counsel his prince, counsel will be withheld, and obsequiousness will be practised. The prince, in return, will conclude himself to be always in the right, when he finds that he is never opposed; and the remembrance of his faults, and the duty of correcting them, will be obliterated in the constant approbation which he is confident of receiving.

Discretion is a quality so important in the royal person, that he should early be taught the most absolute controul over his own mind! He should learn, that no momentary warmth of feeling should ever betray a prince into the disclosure of any thing which wisdom or duty requires him to conceal. But while he is thus vigilantly careful not to commit himself, he should seldom appear to entertain any distrust of those, in whom prudence forbids him to confide. There is scarcely a more unquestionable evidence of sound sense and self-possession, than never to seem burthened with a secret of one's own; nor a surer mark of true politeness, than not to pry curiously into that of another. 'The perfection of behaviour,' says Livy, though he said it on another occasion, 'is for a man (he might have said a prince) to retain his own dignity without intruding on the liberty of another.'

Those who have solicitations to make, should never have reason given them to suspect, that they can work their way to the royal favour by flatteries which sooth rather than by truths which enlighten. Above all a prince should avoid discovering such weaknesses as may encourage suiters to expect success in their applications, by such a spirit of accommodation, such silly compliments, servile sacrifices, and unworthy adulation, as are derogatory to his understanding, and disgraceful to his character.*

A royal person should early be taught that it is no small part of wisdom and virtue to repel improper requests. But while firm in the principle, as Christian duty requires, it is no violation of that duty to be as gentle in the expression, as christian kindness demands; never forgetting the well known circumstance, that of two sovereigns of the house of Stuart, one *refused* favours in a more gracious manner than the other *granted* them. It is, therefore, not enough that a prince should acquire the disposition to confer favours, he should also cultivate the talent. He should not only know how and when to commend, and how and when to bestow, but also how and when to refuse; and should carefully study the important and happy art of discriminating between those whose merit deserves favour, and those whose necessities demand relief. It should be established into a habit, to make no vague promises, raise no false hopes, and disappoint no hopes which have been fairly raised.

Princes should never shelter their meaning under ambiguous expressions: nor use any of those equivocal or general phrases, which may

* It would seem superfluous to guard the royal mind against such petty dangers, did not history furnish so many instances of their ill effects. How much the weak vanity of king James I. laid him open to these despicable flatteries, we have some curious specimens in a letter of lord Thomas Howard to Sir John Harrington, from which we extract the following passage. In advising his friend how to conduct himself in the king's presence, in order to advance his fortune, after some other counsel, he adds, 'Touch but lightly on religion. Do not of yourself say, "this is good or bad;" but if it were your majesty's good opinion, I myself should think so. In private discourse, the king seldom speaketh of any man's temper, discretion, or good virtues; so meddle not at all; but find out a clue to guide you to the heart, most delightful to his mind. I will advise one thing: the roan Jennet, whereon the king rideth every day, must not be forgotten to be praised, and the good furniture above all. What lost a great man much notice the other day, a noble did come in suit of a place, and saw the king mounting the roan, delivered his petition, which was heeded and read, but no answer given. The noble departed, and came to court the next day, and got no answer again. The lord treasurer was then pressed to move the king's pleasure touching the petition. When the king was asked for answer thereto, he said in some wrath, "shall a king give heed to a dirty paper when the beggar noticeth not his gilt stirrups?" Now it fell out, that the king had new furniture, when the noble saw him in the court yard, but he being over charged with confusion, passed by admiring the dressing of the horse. Thus, good night, our noble failed in his suit.'—Nugæ Antiquæ.

be interpreted any way, and which either from their ambiguity, or indeterminate looseness, will be translated into that language, which happens to suit the hopes or the fears of the petitioner. It should ever be remembered that a hasty promise given to gain time, to save appearances, to serve a pressing emergency, or to avoid a present importunity, and not performed when the occasion occurs, does as much harm to the promiser in a political, as in a moral view. For the final disappointment of such raised expectations will do an injury more than equivalent to any temporary advantage, which could be derived from making the promise. Even the wiser worldly politicians have been aware of this. Cardinal Richelieu, overbearing as he was, still preserved the attachment of his adherents by never violating his engagements: while Mazarin, whose vices were of a baser strain, was true to no man, and therefore, attached to no man. There was no set of people on whom he could depend, because there was none whom he had not deceived. Though his less elevated capacity, and more moderate ambition, enabled him to be less splendidly mischievous than his predecessor, yet his bad faith and want of honour, his falsehood and low cunning, as they prevented all men from confiding in him during his life, so have they consigned his memory to perpetual detestation.

In habituating princes to delight to confer favours on the deserving, it should be remembered, that where it is right to bestow them at all, it is also right not to wait till they are solicited. But while the royal person is taught to consider munificence as a truly princely virtue, yet an exact definition of what true, and especially what royal, munificence is, will be one of the most salutary lessons he can learn. Liberality is one of the brightest stars in the whole constellation of virtues; but it shines most benignantly, when it does not depend on its own solitary lustre, but blends its rays with the confluent radiance of the surrounding lights. The individual favour must not intrench on any superior claim; no bounty must infringe on its neighbouring virtues, justice, or discretion; nor must it take its character from its outwardly resembling vices, ostentation, vanity or profusion. Real merit of every kind should be remunerated; but those who possess merits foreign from their own profession, though they should be still rewarded, should not be remunerated out of the resources of that profession. Nor should talents, however considerable, which are irrelevant to the profession, be made a motive for placing a man in it. Louis XIV. chose father la Chaise for his confessor, because he understood something of medals!

There is an idea of beautiful humanity suggested to princes in the Spectator,* in a fictitious account of the emperor Pharamond, who made it his refreshment from the toils of business, and the fatigues of ceremony, to pass an hour or two in the apartment of his favourite, in giving audience to the claim of the meritorious, and in drying the tears of the afflicted. The entrance by which the sorrowful obtained access, was called THE GATE OF THE UNHAPPY. A munificent prince may, in some degree, realize this idea. And what proportions in architecture, what magnificence in dimensions, what splendour of decoration, can possibly adorn a royal palace, so gloriously as such *a gate of the unhappy*.

A royal person should be early taught, by an invincible love of justice, and a constant exercise of kindness, feeling, and gratitude, to invalidate that maxim, that in a court *les absens et les mourans ont toujours tort*. He should possess the generosity, not to expect his favourites to sacrifice their less fortunate friends in order to make their court to him. Examples of this ungenerous selfishness should be commented on in reading. Madame de Maintenon sacrificed the exemplary cardinal de Noailles, and the elegant and virtuous Racine, to the unjust resentment of the king, and refused to incur the risk of displeasing him by defending her oppressed and injured friends.

We have already mentioned the remuneration of services. In a reign where all was baseness, it is not easy to fix on a particular instance; else the neglect manifest by Charles II. towards the author of Hudibras, carries on it a stain of peculiar ingratitude. It is the more unpardonable, because the monarch had taste enough to appreciate, and frequently to quote with admiration the wit of Butler: a wit not transiently employed to promote his pleasure, or to win his favour; but loyally and laboriously exercised in composing one of the most ingenious and original, and unquestionably the most learned poem in the English language. A poem, which independently of its literary merit, did more to advance the royal cause, by stigmatizing with unparalleled powers of irony and ridicule, the fanaticism and hypocrisy of the usurper's party, than had perhaps been effected by all the historians, moralists, divines, and politicians put together. It is not meant, however, to give unqualified praise to this poem. From the heavy charges of levity, and even of profaneness, Hudibras cannot be vindicated; and a scrupulous sovereign would have wished that his cause had been served by better means.—Such a sovereign was not Charles. So far from it, may it not be feared, that these grievous blemishes, instead of alienating the king from the poet, would too probably have been an additional motive for his approbation of the work, and consequently, could not have been his reason for neglecting the author.*

A somewhat similar imputation of ingratitude towards Philip de Commines, though on different grounds of service, detracts not a little from the far more estimable character of Louis XII. As it was this monarch's honourable boast, on another occasion, that the king of France never resented the injuries offered to the duke of Orleans, it should have been equally his care, that the

* Number 84.

* Dryden also materially served the royal cause by his admirable poem of Absalom and Achitophel which determined the conquest of the tories, after the exclusion parliaments. But Dryden was a profligate, whom no virtuous monarch could patronise. Though, when a prince refuses to remunerate the actual services of a first rate genius, because he is an unworthy man, it would be acting consistently to withhold all favour from those who have only the vices without the talents.

services performed for the one should never have been forgotten by the other.

To confer dignity and useful elegance on the hours of social pleasure and relaxation, is a talent of peculiar value, and one of which an highly educated prince is in more complete possession than any other human being. He may turn even the passing topics of the day to good account, by collecting the general opinion; and may gain clearer views of ordinary events and opinions, by hearing them faithfully related, and fairly canvassed. Instead of falling in with the prevailing taste for levity and trifles, he may, without the smallest diminution of cheerfulness or wit in the conversation, insensibly divert its current into the purest channels. The standard of society may be gracefully, and almost imperceptibly raised by exciting the attention to questions of taste, morals, ingenuity, and literature. Under such auspicious influence, every talent will not only be elicited, but directed to its true end. Every taste for what is excellent will be awakened; every mental faculty, and moral feeling will be quickened; and the royal person by the urbanity and condescension with which he thus calls forth abilities to their best exercise, will seem to have infused new powers into his honoured and delighted guests.

A prince is 'the maker of manners;' and as he is the model of the court, so is the court the model of the metropolis, and the metropolis of the rest of the kingdom. He should carefully avail himself of the rare advantage which his station affords, of giving through this widely extended sphere, the tone to virtue as well as to manners. He should bear in mind, that high authority becomes a most pernicious power, when, either by example or countenance, it is made the instrument of extending and establishing corruptions.

We have given an instance of the powerful effect of example in princes, in the influence which the *sincerity* of Henry IV. of France had on those about him. An instance equally striking may be adduced of the eagerness with which the same monarch was imitated in his *vices*. Henry was passionately addicted to gaming, and the contagion of the king's example unhappily spread with the utmost rapidity, not only through the whole court, but the whole kingdom.

And when, not gaming only, but other irregularities; when whatever is notoriously wrong, by being thus countenanced and protected, becomes thoroughly established and fashionable, few will be ashamed of doing wrong. Every thing, indeed, which the court reprobates will continue to be stigmatized; but unhappily, every thing which it countenances will cease to be disreputable. And that which was accounted infamous under a virtuous, would cease to be dishonourable under a corrupt reign. For, while vice is discouraged by the highest authority, notwithstanding it may be practised, it will still be accounted disgraceful; but when that discountenance is withdrawn, shame and dishonour will no longer attend it. The contamination will spread wider, and descend lower, and purity will insensibly lose ground, when even notorious deviations from it are no longer attended with disgrace.

Anne of Austria has been flattered by historians, for having introduced a more refined politeness into the court of France, and for having multiplied its amusements. We hardly know whether this remark is meant to convey praise or censure. It is certain that her cardinal, and his able predecessor, had address enough to discover, that the most effectual method of establishing a despotic government, was to amuse the people, by encouraging a spirit of dissipation, and sedulously providing objects for its gratification. These dexterous politicians knew, that to promote a general passion for pleasure and idleness, would by engaging the minds of the people, render them less dangerous observers, both of the ministers and of their sovereigns. This project, which had perhaps only a temporary view, had lasting consequences. The national character was so far changed by its success, that the country seems to have been brought to the unanimous conclusion, that it was pleasanter to amuse than to defend themselves.

It is also worth remarking, that even where the grossest licentiousness may not be pursued, an unbounded passion for exquisite refinement in pleasure, and for the luxurious gratification of taste, is attended with more deep and serious mischiefs than are perhaps intended. It stagnates higher energies; it becomes itself the paramount principle, and gradually by debasing the heart, both disinclines and disqualifies it for nobler pursuits. The court of Louis XIV. exhibited a striking proof of this degrading perfection. The princes of the blood were so enchanted with its fascinating splendours, that they ignominiously submitted to the loss of all power, importance, and influence in the state, because with a view to estrange them from situations of real usefulness and dignity, they were graciously permitted to preside in matters of taste and fashion, and to become the supreme arbiters in dress, spectacles, and decoration.*

CHAP. XXIV.

On the art of moral calculation, and making a true estimate of things and persons.

A ROYAL person should early be taught to act on that maxim of one of the ancients that the chief misfortunes of men arise from their never being learned *the true art of calculation*. This moral art should be employed to teach him how

* It is humiliating to the dignity of a prince when his subjects believe that they can recommend themselves to his favour by such low qualifications as a nice attention to personal appearance, and modish attire. Of this we shall produce an instance from another passage of Lord Thomas Howard's Letters to Sir John Harrington. 'The king,' says he, 'doth admire good fashion in cloaths. I pray you give good heed hereunto. I would wish you to be well trimmed; get a good jerkin well bordered, and not too short: The king saith, he liketh a flowing garment. Be sure it be not all of one sort, but diversely coloured; the collar falling somewhat down, and your ruff well stiffened and bushy. We have lately had many gallants *who have failed in their suit for want of due observance in these matters*. The king is nicely heedful of such points, and dwelleth on good looks and handsome accoutrements.'—Nugæ Antiquæ.

to pay the comparative value of things; and to adjust their respective claims; assigning to each that due proportion of time and thought to which each will, on a fair valuation, be found to be entitled. It will also teach the habit of setting the concerns of time, in contrast with those of eternity. This last is not one of those speculative points on which persons may differ without danger, but one in which an erroneous calculation involves inextricable misfortunes.

It is prudent to have a continual reference not only to the value of the object, but also to the probability there is of attaining it; not only to see that it is of sufficient importance to justify our solicitude; but also to take care, that designs of remote issue, and projects of distant execution, do not supersede present and actual duties. Providence, by setting so narrow limits to life itself, in which these objects are to be pursued, has clearly suggested to us, the impropriety of forming schemes, so disproportionate in their dimensions, to our contracted sphere of action. Nothing but this doctrine of moral calculation, will keep up in the mind a constant sense of that future reckoning, which, even to a private individual, is of unspeakable moment; but, which to a prince, whose responsibility is so infinitely greater, increases to a magnitude, the full sum of which, the human mind would in vain attempt to estimate. This principle will afford the most salutary check to those projects of remote vainglory, and posthumous ambition, of which in almost every instance, it is difficult to pronounce, whether they have been more idle, or more calamitous.

History, fertile as it is in similar lessons, does not furnish a more striking instance of the mischiefs of erroneous calculation, than in the character of Alexander. How falsely did he estimate the possible exertions of one man, and the extent of human life, when, in the course of his reign, which eventually proved a short one, he resolved to change the face of the world; to conquer its kingdoms, to enlighten its ignorance, and to redress its wrongs! a chimera, indeed, but a glorious chimera, had he not, at the same time, and to the last hour of his life, indulged passions inconsistent with his own resolutions, and subversive of his own schemes. His thirty-third year put a period to projects, for which many ages would have been insufficient! and the vanity of his ambition forms a forcible contrast to the grandeur of his designs.—His gigantic empire, acquired by unequalled courage, ambition, and success, did not gradually decay by the lapse of time; it did not yield to the imperious control of strange events and extraordinary circumstances, which it was beyond the wisdom of man to foresee, or the power of man to resist; but naturally, but instantly, on the death of the conqueror, it was at once broken in pieces, all his schemes were in a moment abolished, and even the dissolution of his own paternal inheritance was speedily accomplished, by the contests of his immediate successors.

But we need not look back to ancient Greece for proofs of the danger of erroneous calculation, while Louis XIV. occupies the page of history. This descendant of fifty kings, after a triumphant reign of sixty years, having, like Alexander, been flattered with the name of *the great*, and having, doubtless, like him, projected to reign after his decease, was not dead an hour before his will was cancelled; a will not made in secret, and like some of his former acts, annulled by its own inherent injustice, but publicly known and generally approved by princes of the blood, counsellors, and parliaments. This royal will was set aside with less ceremony, than would have been shown, in this country, to the testament of the meanest individual. All formalities were forgotten; all decencies trodden under foot. This decree of the new executive power became, in a moment, as absolute as that of the monarch, now so contemptuously treated, had lately been. No explanation was given, no arguments were heard, no objections examined. That sovereign was totally and instantly forgotten—

> ——whose word
> Might yesterday have stood against the world;
> And none so poor to do him reverence.

The plans of Cæsar Borgia were so ably laid, that he thought he had put himself out of the reach of Providence. It was the boast of this execrable politician, that he had, by the infallible rules of a wise and foreseeing policy, so surely laid the immutable foundations of his own lasting greatness, that of the several possibilities which he had calculated, not one could shake the stability of his fortune. If the pope, his father, should live, his grandeur was secure; if he died, he had, by his interest secured the next election. But this deep schemer had forgotten to take his own mortality into account. He did not calculate on that sickness, which would remove him from the scene where his presence was necessary to secure these events; he did not foresee, that when his father died, his mortal enemy, and not his creature, would succeed, and by succeeding, would defeat every thing. Above all he did not calculate, that, when he invited to his palace nine cardinals, for whose supper he had prepared a deadly poison, in order to get their wealth into his own hands—he did not, I say, foresee, that

> ——he but taught
> Bloody instructions, which being taught, returned
> To plague the inventor—

He did not think that *literally*

> ——Even-handed justice
> Would give the ingredients of the poison'd chalice
> To his own lips.

He had left out of his calculation, that the pope, his father, would perish by the very plot which was employed to enrich him; while he, Borgia himself, with the mortal venom in his veins, should only escape to drag on a life of meanness, and misery, in want, and in prison; with the loss of his boundless wealth and power, losing all those adherents which that wealth and power had attracted.

It is of the last importance, that persons of high condition should be preserved from entering on their brilliant career with false principles, false views, and false maxims. It is of the last importance, to teach them not to confound

splendour with dignity, justice with success, merit with prosperity, voluptuousness with happiness, refinement in luxury with pure taste, deceit with sagacity, suspicion with penetration, prodigality with a liberal spirit, honour with christian principle, christian principle with fanaticism, or conscientious strictness with hypocrisy.

Young persons possess so little clearness in their views, so little distinctness in their perceptions, and are so much inclined to prefer the suggestions of a warm fancy to the sober deductions of reason, that, in their pursuit of glory and celebrity, they are perpetually liable to take up with false way-marks; and where they have some general good intentions respecting the end, to defeat their own purposes by a misapplication of means; so that, very often, they do not so much err through the seduction of the senses, as by accumulating false maxims into a sort of system, on which they afterwards act through life.

One of the first lessons that should be inculcated on the great is, that God has not sent us into this world to give us consummate happiness, but to train us to those habits which lead to it. High rank lays the mind open to strong temptations; the highest rank to the strongest. The seducing images of luxury and pleasure, of splendour and of homage, of power and independence, are too seldom counteracted by the only adequate preservative, a religious education. The world is too generally entered upon as a scene of pleasure, instead of trial; as a theatre of amusement, not of action. The high born are taught to enjoy the world at an age when they should be learning to know it; and to grasp the prize when they should be exercising themselves for the combat. They consequently look for the sweets of victory, when they should be enduring the hardness of the conflict.

From some of these early corruptions, a young princess will be preserved, by that very supereminent greatness, which, in other respects, has its dangers. Her exalted station, by separating her from miscellaneous society, becomes her protection from many of its maxims and practices. From the dangers of her own peculiar situation she should be guarded by being early taught to consider power and influence, not as exempting her from the difficulties of life or insuring to her a large portion of pleasures, but as engaging her in a peculiarly extended sphere of duties, and infinitely increasing the demands on her fortitude and vigilance.

The right formation of her judgment will much assist in her acquisition of right practical habits; and the art of making a just estimate of men and things, will be one of the most useful lessons she will have to learn. Young persons, in their views of the world, are apt to make a false estimate of character, something in the way in which the Roman mob decided on that of Cæsar. They are dazzled with the glitter of a shining action, without scrutinizing the character, or suspecting the motive of the actor. From the scene which followed Cæsar's death, they may learn a salutary lesson. How easily did the insinuating Antony persuade the people, that the man who had actually robbed them of their liberty, and of those privileges in defence of which their ancestors had shed their best blood, was a prodigy of disinterested generosity, because he had left them permission to walk in his pleasure-grounds! the bequest of a few drachms to each, was sufficient to convince these shallow reasoners, that their deceased benefactor, was the most disinterested, and least selfish, of mankind. In this popular act they forgot, that he had ravaged Greece, depopulated Gaul, plundered Asia, and subverted the commonwealth!

The same class of ardent and indiscriminating judges will pass over, in the popular character of our fifth Henry, the profligacy of his morals, and the ambition of his temper, and think only of his personal bravery, and his splendid success. They will forget, in the conqueror of Agincourt, the abettor of superstition and cruelty, and the unfeeling persecutor of the illustrious lord Cobham.

But, in no instance has a false judgment been more frequently made, than in the admired and attractive character of Henry IV. of France. The frankness of his manners, the gallantry of his spirit, and the generosity of his temper, have concurred to unite the public judgment in his favour, and to obtain too much indulgence to his unsteady principles, and his libertine conduct. But the qualities which insure popularity too seldom stand the scrutiny of truth. Born with talents and dispositions to engage all hearts, Henry was defective in that radical principle of conscience, which is the only foundation of all true virtue. The renunciation of his religion for the crown of France, which was thought a master-stroke of policy, which was recommended by statesmen, justified by divines, and even *approved by Sully*, was probably, as most acts of mere worldly policy, often eventually prove to be, the source of his subsequent misfortunes. —Had he preferred his religion to the crown of France, he had not fallen the victim of a fanatical assassin. Had he limited his desires to the kingdom of Navarre, when that of France could only be obtained by the sacrifice of his conscience, the heroism of his character would then have been unequivocal, and his usefulness to mankind might have been infinitely extended. Nor is it impossible, that those who urged the condition might by the steady perseverance of his refusal, have been induced to relinquish it; and French protestantism, from his conscientious adherence to its principles, might have derived such a strength, as soon to have made it paramount in the state: an event which would probably have saved Europe from those horrors and agitations, with which the late century closed, and the present has commenced, the termination of which remains awfully concealed in the yet unrolled volume of eternal Providence.

How much more solid, though neither sung by the poet nor immortalized by the sculptor,* was the virtue of his illustrious mother, honourably introducing, with infinite labour and hazard, the reformation into her small territory!

* Henry IV. was chosen by Voltaire for the hero of his Epic Poem, and his statue was for a long time respected in France, when those of other kings were destroyed.

Nothing, says her warm eulogist, bishop Burnet, was wanting to make the queen of Navarre perfect, but a larger dominion. 'She not only reformed her court, but her whole principality, to such a degree, that the golden age seems to have returned under her, or rather Christianity, appeared again, with its pristine purity and lustre. Nor is there one single abatement to be made her. *Only her sphere was narrow.*' But is not this to make greatness depend too much on extrinsic accident? That sphere is large enough which is rounded with perfection. A Christian queen during her troubled life! A martyr in her exemplary death, hastened, as is too probable, by the black devices of one, as much the opprobrium, as she herself was the glory of queens; the execrable plotter of the massacre of St. Bartholomew! Happy for Catherine di Medici, and for France, of which she was regent during the minority of three kings, had her sphere been as contracted as was that of Jane of Navarre![*]

For want of having learned to make a just estimate of the relative value of actions, Louis XIV. while he was laying Flanders waste, and depopulating whole provinces, probably persuaded himself, that he was actuated by pure charity and love of the people, because he carried in his military caleche some bags of bread and money, which he distributed, as he passed, to the famished peasantry; beings, whose hunger was caused by his ambition: hunger which the ostentatious distribution of a few loaves and livres could relieve but for a moment. He might have given them peace, and saved his bread. He should have reflected, that the most munificent charities of a prince, commendable as they are in themselves, can be only local and partial; and are almost nothing, in the way of benefit, compared with a deliverance, which it was in his power to have granted them, from the miseries of war. In a prince, to love peace, is to be charitable on a grand scale.—The evils which he personally relieves, in consequence of their presenting themselves to his senses, highly as that species of bounty should be rated, must be out of all proportion few, compared, with those which never meet his eyes. If, by compassionating the one, he soothes his own feelings, while he forgets the other, only because they are too remote to come in contact with these feelings, his charity is little better than self-love.

[*] Nature, perhaps, never produced a more perfect contrast, than these two contemporary queens. The intellectual subtilty of Catharine's vices more resembled those of an infernal spirit, than of a corrupt woman. She had an exquisite genius for crimes. The arts she employed against those, whose destruction she meditated, were varied and applied with the nicest appropriation to their case and character: and her success was proportioned to her skill. Power, riches, pleasures, were the baits which she held out, with exact discrimination, to different men, according as their tempers inclined them to either. Her deep knowledge of mankind she converted to the purpose of alluring, betraying, and destroying all, against whom she had designs: and she had the ingenuity to ruin every one in his own way. She not only watched the vices and weaknesses, but the very virtues of men, in order to work with them to their destruction.—The excess of a good quality, the elevation of a virtue, was in her hands a better implement for working the ruin of its possessor than even his faults. Her dissimulation was so exquisite, her patience in evil so persevering, that no time appeared too long for nourishing impious projects, and ripening them to perfection. Aware, at length, that that rare combination of deceit and cruelty which met in her character was detected; in order to complete the destruction of the protestants more signally, her son, a puppet in her hands, was taught to foster and caress them. Two years did this pernicious Italian brood over this plot.† Its dire catastrophe who does not know? Queen Jane was poisoned, as a prologue to this bloody tragedy, a sovereign to whom even the bigotted historians of the popish communion concur in ascribing all that was elegant, accomplished, and pure in woman, with all that was wise, heroic, learned, and intrepid in man!

† For a more detailed character of Catharine, see the Life of Agrippa D'Aubigne.

CHAP. XXV.

On erroneous judgment.—Character of queen Christina of Sweden.—Comparison of Christina with Alfred.

Nothing leads more to false estimates than our suffering that natural desire of happiness, congenial to the human heart, to mislead us by its eagerness. The object in itself is not only natural, but laudable; but the steps which are supposed to lead to it, when ill regulated, never attain the end. Vice, of whatever kind, leads to inevitable misery; yet, through a false calculation, even while happiness is intended, vice is pursued. The voluptuous will not be persuaded to set bounds to their indulgencies. Thus they commonly destroy both health of body, and peace of mind; yet the most voluptuous never *intend* to be miserable. What a necessity hence arises, for early infusing right principles, and training to safe and temperate habits, when even the very desire of happiness, if left merely to its instinctive movement, is almost certain to plunge its votary into final and irremediable wretchedness!

But in no instance is the defective judgment which leads to false estimates, more to be regretted, than in the case of those who apply themselves to pursuits, and affect habits foreign from their station; who spend their season of improvement in cultivating talents, which they can rarely bring into exercise, to the neglect of those which they are peculiarly called to acquire; who run out of their proper road in pursuit of false fame, while they renounce the solid glory of a real, an attainable, and an appropriate renown.

The danger of a prince often becomes, in this respect, the greater, because, while he sees a path open before him, suppose in the case of the fine arts, by which he beholds others rising into universal notice and celebrity, he feels, perhaps, a natural propensity to the same pursuits, and a consciousness of being able to excel in them. Meanwhile, even his weakest efforts are flattered by those around him, as the sure presages of excellence; and he is easily led to believe, that if he will condescend to enter the lists, he is certain to attain the palm of victory. When we consider the amount of the temptation, we should be almost ready to forgive the emperor Nero, had it been only in displaying his musical or theatrical talents, that he had de-

parted from the line of rectitude. But to see a Roman emperor travelling through Greece in character of an artist, in order to extort the applause of a people eminent for their taste, was an indication of farther evils. The infatuation remained to his last hour; for, in his dying moments, instead of thinking how Rome must rejoice to be rid of such a master, he only wondered how the world could submit to the loss of such a performer.

It is one of the many evils which result from indulging such misplaced propensities, that it produces a fatal forgetfulness of all the proper duties of a sovereign, and of his legitimate sphere of emulation. Having once eaten of the forbidden fruit of this meretricious praise, he becomes fonder of the relish, his taste is corrupted,—his views are lowered,—his ambition is contracted; and indolence conspires with vanity, in perpetuating his delusion, and in making him take up with pursuits, and gratifications, far below the level of his high original.

For a prince, who has formed a just estimate of his own exalted station, will ever bear in mind, that as its rank, its rights, and its privileges, are all of a kind peculiar to itself, so also must be its honours. Providence has laid open to a prince an elevated and capacious field of glory, from which subjects must be ever excluded, by the very circumstances of their civil condition. A prince will but degrade himself, when he descends from his vantage ground, which he naturally occupies, to mix in the competitions of ordinary men. He engages in a contest in which, though failure may disgrace, success cannot do him honour. Monarchs, therefore, would do well to remember, and to improve upon the principle of the dignified reply of Alexander, who being asked whether he would not engage in the competition for the prize at the Olympic games, answered, '—Yes, if KINGS are to be my competitors.' Nor perhaps would the high-minded answer of Alcibiades be unbecoming in a prince,—'It is not for me to give, but to receive delight.'

Ever therefore, let those whose important duty it is, to superintend the education of a royal person, labour to fix in him a just conception of the *proprieties* of his princely character. Let them teach him how to regulate all his judgments and pursuits, by the rule of reason, by a sound and serious estimate of his own condition, and of the *peculiar* duties, excellencies, and honours, which belong to it, on grounds no less of wisdom than of virtue.

We know not how better to illustrate the nature and confirm the truth of these remarks, than by adducing, as an eminent instance of a contrary kind, the character of queen Christina of Sweden, the memorable tale of her false judgment, and perverted ambition—Christina, a woman whose whole character was one mass of contradictions! That same defect in judgment, which, after she had, with vast cost and care, collected some of the finest pictures in Rome, led her to spoil their proportions, by clipping them with sheers, till they fitted her apartment, appeared in all she did. It led her, while she thirsted for adulation, to renounce, in abdicating her crown, the means of exacting it. It led her, to read almost all books, without digesting any; to make them the theme of her discourse, but not the ground of her conduct. It led her, fond as she was of magnificence, to reduce herself to such a state of indigence, as robbed her of the power of enjoying it. And it was the same inconsistency which made her court the applause of men, eminent for their religious character, while she valued herself on being an avowed infidel.

This royal wanderer roamed from country to country, and from court to court, for the poor purpose of entering the lists with wits, or of discussing knotty points with philosophers: proud of aiming to be the rival of Vossius, when her true merit would have consisted in being his protector. Absurdly renouncing the solid glory of governing well, for the sake of hunting after an empty phantom of liberty, which she never enjoyed, and vainly grasping at the shadow of fame, which she never attained.

Nothing is right, which is not in its right place.—Disorderly wit, even disorderly virtues, lose much of their natural value. There is an exquisite symmetry and proportion in the qualities of a well-ordered mind. An ill-regulated desire of that knowledge, the best part of which she might have acquired with dignity, at her leisure hours: an unbounded vanity, eager to exhibit to foreign countries those attainments which ought to have been exercised in governing her own;—to be thought a philosopher by wits, and a wit by philosophers;—this was the preposterous ambition of a queen born to rule a brave people, and naturally possessed of talents, which might have made that people happy. Thus it wasthat the daughter of the great Gustavus, who might have adorned that throne for which he so bravely fought, for want of the discretion of a well-balanced mind, and the virtues of a well-disciplined heart, became the scorn of those, whose admiration she might have commanded. Her ungoverned tastes were, as is not unusual, connected with passions equally ungovernable; and there is too much ground for suspecting that the mistress of Monaldeschi ended with being his murderer.—It is not surprising that she who abdicated her throne should abjure her religion. Having renounced every thing else which was worth preserving, she ended by renouncing the protestant faith.

It may not be without its uses to the royal pupil, to compare the conduct of Christina with that of Alfred, in those points in which they agreed, and those in which they exhibited so striking an opposition.—To contrast the Swede, who with the advantage of a lettered education, descended from the throne, abandoned the noblest and wisest sphere of action in which the instructed mind could desire to employ its store, and renounced the highest social duties which a human being can be called to perform, with Alfred, one of the few happy instances in which genius and virtue surmounted the disadvantages of an education so totally neglected, that at twelve years old he did not even know the letters of the alphabet. *He* did not abdicate his crown, in order to cultivate his own talents, or to gratify his fancy

with the talents of others, but laboured right royally to assemble around the throne all the abilities of his country. Alfred had no sooner tasted the charms of learning, than his great genius unfolded itself. He was enchanted with the elegancies of literature to a degree which at first seemed likely to divert him from all other objects. But he soon reflected that a prince is not born for himself. When therefore, he was actually called to the throne, did *he* weakly desert his royal duties, to run into distant lands, to recite Saxon verses, or to repeat that classic poetry of which he became so enamoured? No. Like a true patriot he devoted his rare genius to the noblest purposes. He dedicated the talents of the sovereign to the improvement of the people. He did not renounce his learning when he became a king, but he consecrated it to a truly royal purpose. And while the Swedish vagrant was subsisting on eleemosynary flattery, bestowed in pity to her real but misapplied abilities, Alfred was exercising his talents like the father of his country. He did not consider study as a mere gratification of his own taste. He knew that a king has nothing exclusively his own, not even his literary attainments. He threw his erudition, like other possessions, into the public stock. He diffused among the people his own knowledge, which flowed in all directions, like streams from their parent fountain, fertilizing every portion of the human soil, so as to produce, if not a rapid growth, yet a disposition both for science and virtue, where shortly before there had been a barbarous waste, a complete moral and mental desolation.

CHAP. XXVI.

Observations on the age of Louis XIV. and on Voltaire.

If in the present work we frequently cite Louis XIV. it is because on such an occasion his idea naturally presents itself. His reign was so long; his character so prominent; his qualities so ostensible; his affairs were so interwoven with those of the other countries of Europe, and especially with those of England; the period in which he lived produced such a revolution in manners; and, above all, his encomiastic historian, Voltaire, has decorated both the period and the king, with so much that is great and brilliant, that they fill a large space in the eye of the reader. Voltaire writes as if the *age of Louis* XIV. bounded the circle of human glory; as if the antecedent history of Europe were among those inconsiderable and obscure annals, which are either lost in fiction, or sunk in insignificance; as if France, at the period he celebrates, bore the same relation to the modern, that Rome did to the ancient world, when she divided the globe into two portions, Romans and barbarians; as if Louis were the central sun from which all the lesser lights of the European firmament borrowed their feeble radiance.

But whatever other countries may do, England at least is able to look back with triumph to ages anterior to that which is exclusively denominated the age of Louis XIV. Nay, in that vaunted age itself we venture to dispute with France the palm of glory. To all they boast of arms, we need produce no other proof of superiority than that we conquered the boasters. To all that they bring in science, and it must be allowed that they bring much, or where would be the honour of eclipsing them? we have to oppose our Locke, our Boyle, and our Newton. To their long list of wits and poets, it would be endless, in the way of competition, to attempt enumerating, star by star, the countless constellation which illuminated the bright contemporary reign of Anne.

The principal reason for which we so often cite the conduct, and, in citing the conduct, refer to the errors of Louis, is, that there was a time, when the splendor of his character, his imposing magnificence and generosity, made us in too much danger of considering him as a model. The illusion has in a good degree vanished; yet the inexperienced reader is not only still liable, by the dazzling qualities of the king, to be blinded to his vices, but is in danger of not finding out that those very qualities were themselves little better than vices.

But it is not enough for writers, who wish to promote the best interests of the great, to expose *vices*, they should also consider it as part of their duty to strip off the mask from *false virtues*, especially those to which the highly born and the highly flattered are peculiarly liable. To those who are captivated with the shining annals of the ambitious and the magnificent; who are struck with the glories with which the brows of the bold and the prosperous are encircled; such calm, unobtrusive qualities as justice, charity, temperance, meekness, and purity, will make but a mean figure; or, at best, will be considered only as the virtues of the vulgar, not as the attributes of kings. While in the portrait of the conqueror, ambition, sensuality, oppression, luxury, and pride, painted in the least offensive colours, and blended with the bright tints of personal bravery, gayety, and profuse liberality, will lead the sanguine and the young to doubt whether the former class of qualities, *can* be very mischievous, which is so blended and lost in the latter, especially when they find that hardly any abatement is made by the historian for the one, while the other is held up to admiration.

There is no family in which the showy qualities have more blinded the reader, and sometimes the writer also, to their vices, than the princes of the house of Medici. The profligate Alexander, the first usurper of the dukedom of Florence, is declared by one of his historians, Sandoval, *to be a person of excellent conduct;* and though the writer himself acknowledges his extreme licentiousness, yet he says, 'he won the Florentines by his *obliging manners*:' those Florentines whom he not only robbed of their freedom, but dishonoured in the persons of their wives and daughters; his unbounded profligacy not even respecting the sanctity of convents! Another writer, speaking of the house of Medici collectively, says, 'their having restored knowledge and elegance will, in time, obliterate their faults. Their *usurpation, tyranny, pride, perfidy,*

vindictive cruelty, parricides, and incest, will be remembered no more. Future ages will forget their atrocious crimes in fond admiration!"* Ought historians to teach such lessons to princes? Ought they to be told that 'knowledge and elegance' cannot be bought too dear, though purchased by such atrocious crimes?—The illustrious house of Medici seems to have revived in every point of resemblance, the Athenian character. With one or two honourable exceptions, it exhibits the same union of moral corruption, with mental taste; the same genius for the arts, and the same neglect of the virtues; the same polish and the same profligacy; the same passion for learning, and the same appetite for pleasure; the same interchange of spectacles and assassinations; the same preference of the beauty of a statue to the life of a citizen.

So false are the estimates which have ever been made of human conduct; so seldom has praise been justly bestowed in this life; so many wrong actions not only escape censure, but are accounted reputable, that it furnishes one strong argument for a future retribution. This injustice of human judgment led even the pagan Plato, in the person of Socrates, to assign, in an ingenious fiction, a reason why a judgment after death was appointed. He accounts for the necessity of this, by observing, that in a preceding period each person had been judged in his *lifetime* and by *living judges*. The consequence was, that false judgments were continually passed. The reason of these unjust decisions, he observes, is, that men being judged in the *body*, the blemishes and defects of their *minds* are overlooked, in consideration of their beauty, their high rank, or their riches; and being also surrounded by a multitude who are always ready to extol their virtues, the judges of course are biassed; and being themselves also in a body, their own minds also are darkened. It was therefore determined, that men should not be called to their trial till after death, when they shall appear before the judge, himself a pure ethereal spirit, stripped of that body and those ornamental appendages which had misled earthly judges.† The spirit of this fable is as applicable to the age of Louis XIV. as it was to that of Alexander, in which it was written.

Liberality is a truly loyal virtue, a virtue too, which has its own immediate reward in the delight which accompanies its exercise. All wealth is in order to diffusion. If novelty be, as has been said, the great charm of life, there is no way of enjoying it so perfectly as by perpetual acts of beneficence. The great become insensible to the pleasure of their own affluence, from having been long used to it: but, in the distribution of riches, there is always something fresh and reviving; and the opulent add to their own stock of happiness all that their bounty bestows on others. It is pity, therefore, on the mere score of voluptuousness, that neither Vitellius nor Eliogabalus, nor any of the other imperial gourmands, was ever so fortunate as to find out this multiplied luxury of 'eating with many mouths at once.'—Homage must satiate, intemperance will cloy, splendor will fatigue, dissipation exhaust, and adulation subject; but the delights of beneficence will be always new and refreshing. And there is no quality in which a prince has it more in his power to exhibit a feint resemblance of that great being, whose representative he is, than in the capacity and the love of this communicative goodness.

But, it is the perfection of the Christian virtues, that they never intrench on each other. It is a trite remark, yet a remark that requires to be repeated, that liberality loses the very name of virtue, when it is practised at the expense of justice, or even of prudence. It must be allowed, that of all the species of liberality, there is not one more truly royal than that which fosters genius and rewards letters. But the motive of the patron, and the resources from which his bounty is drawn, must determine on the merit of the action. Leo X. has been extolled by all his historians as a prodigy of generosity; a quality, indeed, which eminently distinguished his whole family: but the admiration excited by reading the numberless instances of his munificent spirit that in remunerating men of talents, will receive a great drawback, by reflecting, he drew a large part of the resources necessary for his liberality from the scandalous *sale of indulgences*. This included not only selling the good works of the saints, (of which the church had always an inexhaustible chest on hand,) over and above such as were necessary to their own salvation. To any affluent sinner who was rich enough to pay for them; not only a full pardon for sins past and present of the living offender, but for all that were to come, however great their number or enormous their nature.*

The splendid pontiff earned an immortal fame in the grateful pages of those scholars who tasted of his bounty, while by this operation of fraud upon folly, the credulous multitude were drained of their money, the ignorant tempted to the boldest impiety, the vicious to the most unbounded profligacy, and the measure of the iniquities of the church of Rome was filled up.

But Louis XIV. carried this honourable generosity to an extent unknown before. He bestowed presents and pensions on no less than sixty men of the most eminent talents and learning in different countries of Europe. One is sorry to be compelled, by truth, to detract from the splendour of such liberality, by two remarks. In the first place, it is notorious, that the bounty originated from his having learned that cardinal Richelieu had sent large presents to many learned foreigners, who had written panegyrics on him. Who can help suspecting, that the king, less patient or less prudent than the cardinal, was eager to pay beforehand for his own anticipated panegyrics? Secondly, who can help regretting, that the large sums thus liberally bestowed, had not been partly subtracted from the expense of his own boundless self-gratifications, which were at the same time carried on with a

* Noble's memoirs of the illustrious house of Medici.

† See Guardian, No. 27.

* This munificent pope, not contented with supplying his own wants by this spiritual traffic, provided also for his relations by setting them up in the same lucrative commerce. His sister Magdalen's portion was derived from the large sphere assigned her for carrying on this merchandize; her warehouse was in Saxony. More distant relations had smaller shops in different provinces, for the sale of this popular commodity.

profusion without example? For Louis was contented with bringing into action a sentiment which Nero even ventured to put into words, 'that there was no other use of treasure but to squander it. Who can forget that this money had been extorted from the people, by every impost and exaction which Colbert, his indefatigable minister, himself a patron of genius, could devise? How ineffectually does the historian and eulogist of the king labour to vindicate him on this very ground of profusion, from the imputed charge of avarice, by strangely asserting, that a king of France, who possesses no income distinct from the revenues of the state, and who only distributes the public money, cannot be accused of covetousness! an apology almost as bad as the imputed crime. For, where is the merit of any liberality which not only subtracts nothing from the gratification of the giver, but which is exercised at the positive expense of the public comfort?*

Colbert has been even preferred to Sully, for his zeal in diminishing peculation and public abuses. But though Colbert was a very able minister, yet there was a wide difference between his motives of action and those of Sully, and between their application of the public money. But, even the profuseness of the extortioner Fouquet, in squandering the revenues of the state as freely as if they had been his own private property, is converted by Voltaire into a proof of the greatness of his soul, because his depredations were spent in acts of munificence and liberality; as if the best possible application of money could atone for injustice or oppression in the acquisition of it!

In how different a mould was the soul of Gustavus Adolphus cast! and how much more correct were the views of that great king as to the true grounds of liberality! As brave a warrior as Charles XII. without his brutal ferocity; as liberal as Louis, without his prodigality; as zealous a patron of letters as Henry VIII. without his vanity!—He was, indeed, so warm a friend to learning, that he erected schools, and founded universities, in the very uproar of war. —These he endowed, not by employing his ministers to levy taxes on the distressed people, not by exhausting the resources of the state, meritorious as was the object to be established; but by converting to these noble institutions, almost all *his own* patrimonial lands of the house of Vasa.

Against the principles of Voltaire, it is now scarcely necessary to caution the young reader: His disgrace has become almost as signal as his offences; his crimes seem to have procured for his works their just reprobation. To enter on a particular censure of them, might be only to invite our readers to their perusal; and, indeed, a criticism on his philosophical and innumerable miscellaneous writings, pestilential as their general principle is, would be foreign from the present purpose, as there is little danger that the royal pupil should ever be brought within the sphere of their contamination. I shall therefore confine myself to a very few observations on his character of the monarch, in the work under consideration; a work which is still most likely to be read, and which, notwithstanding its faults, perhaps, best deserves a perusal—His age of Louis the fourteenth.

In summing up the king's character, he calls his unbounded profligacy in the variety of his mistresses, and the ruinous prodigality with which they were supported, by the cool term of *weakness*. Voltaire again does not blush to compliment a sovereign, whose life was one long tissue of criminal attachments, with having 'uniformly observed the strictest rules of decency and decorum towards his wife.' His rancour against the Jansenists; his unjust ambition and arbitrary temper; his wars, which Voltaire himself allows 'to have been undertaken without reason;' his cruel ravaging of the Palatinate with fire and sword, and its wretched inhabitants driven from shelter to woods and dens, and caves of the earth; his bloody persecution of the protestants; these he calls by the gentle name of *littleness;* not forgetting, in the true modern spirit of moral calculation, to place in one scale his admired qualities of whatsoever class, his beauty, valour, taste, generosity, and magnificence; and to throw into the other, his crimes and vices, which being assumed to be only *littlenesses* and *weaknesses*, it is no wonder if he glories in the preponderance of his virtues in the balance.

By thus reducing a mass of mischief into almost impalpable frailties, and opposing to them with enthusiastic rapture, qualities of no real solidity, he holds out a picture of royalty too alluring to the unformed judgment of young and ardent readers, to whom it ought to be explained, that this tinsel is not gold, that *les bienseances* are not virtues, and that graces of manner are a poor substitute for integrity of heart and rectitude of conduct.

By the avowal of the same author, it was in the very lap of pleasure, when all was one unbroken scene of joy, when life was one perpetual course of festive delight, masked balls, pageants, and spectacles, that the Palatinate was twice laid in ashes, the extermination of the Protestants decreed, and the destruction of Holland planned.—The latter, not by the sudden ardour of a victorious soldiery, but by a cool deliberate mandate, in a letter under the king's own hand.

Voltaire has expressed his astonishment that these decrees, which he himself allows to have been 'cruel and merciless,' should proceed from the bosom of a court distinguished for softness of manners, and sunk in voluptuous indulgences. We might rather wonder at any such expression of astonishment in so ingenious a writer, were we not well assured, that no acuteness of genius can give that deep insight into the human heart, which our religion alone teaches, in teaching us the corruption of our nature; much

* The person who now holds the reins of government in a neighbouring nation, is said successfully to have adopted similar measures. He early made it his studious care to buy up the good report of authors and men of talents, knowing mankind well enough to be assured, that this was the sure and immediate road to that fame for which he pants. Near spectators instantly detect the fallacy; but strangers, as he foresaw, would mistake the adulation of these bribed witnesses for the general opinion; the assertion of the declaimer for the sentiment of the public. Accordingly the sycophantry of the journalist has been represented as the voice of the people.

less can it inspire the infidel with that quickness of moral taste, which enables the true disciples of Christianity, to appreciate, as if by a natural instinct, human characters.

It is indeed obvious to all who have sound views of religion, and a true knowledge of mankind, that this cruelty, so far from being inconsistent with, actually sprung from that very spirit of voluptuousness, which, by concentrating all feeling into *self*, totally hardens the heart to the happiness of others.—Who does not know that a soul dissolved in sensual pleasure, is naturally dead to all compassion, and all kindness, which has not fame, or interest, or self-gratification, for its object? Who are they of whom the prophet declares, that 'they are not moved by the affliction of their brethren?'—It is they 'who lie in beds of ivory, that chant to the sound of the viol, that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with ointments.' Selfishness was the leading charge brought by the apostle against the enemies of religion. It stands foremost in that catalogue of sins assigned by him as the mark of the apostate times, that *men should be lovers of their ownselves.*

But even without this divine teaching, Voltaire might have been informed by general history, of which he was not only an universal reader, but an universal writer, of the natural connection between despotism and licentiousness. The annals of all nations bear their concurrent testimony to this glaring truth. It would be endless to enumerate exemplifications of it from the melancholy catalogue of Roman emperors. Nero, who claims among the monarchs of the earth the execrable precedency in cruelty, was scarcely less pre-eminent in voluptuousness. Tiberius was as detestable for profligacy at Caprea, as infamous for tyranny at Rome.—In the history of the Mohammedan kings, barbarity and self-indulgence generally bear a pretty exact proportion to each other.—Sensuality and tyranny equally marked the character of our eighth Henry. Shall we then wonder, if, under Lewis, feasts at Versailles, which eclipsed all former splendour, and decorations at Trianon and Marli, which exhausted art and beggars invention, were the accompaniments to the flight, despair, and execution of the Hugonots? So exactly did luxury keep pace with intolerance, and voluptuousness with cruelty.

Even many of the generally admired qualities of Louis, which assumed the air of more solid virtues, were not sterling. His resolution and spirit of perseverance were nothing better than that obstinacy and self-sufficiency, which were the common attributes of ordinary characters. Yet, this pride and stubbornness were extolled in the measure they were persisted in, and in proportion to the evils of which they were the cause: and his parasites never failed to elevate these defects to the dignity of fortitude, and the praise of firmness.

CHAP. XXVII.

Farther observations on Louis XIV. An examination of the claims of those princes who have obtained the appellation of "the great."

In considering the character of Louis XIV. in the foregoing chapter, we are led by the imposing appellation of THE GREAT, which has been conferred on this monarch, to inquire how far a passion for shows and pageants; a taste for magnificence and the polite arts; a fondness for war, the theatre of which he contrived to make a scene of the most luxurious accommodation; together with a profuse and undistinguishing liberality, entitled Louis to that appellation, which would seem to imply the possession of all the heroic qualities, of which he appears to have been utterly destitute.

We are aware that the really heroic virtues are growing into general disesteem.—*The age of chivalry is gone!* said a great genius of our own time; one who laboured, though with less effect, to raise the spirit of true chivalry, as much as Cervantes had done to lay the false. 'The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone!'*

Selfishness is scarcely more opposite to true religion than true gallantry. Men are not fond of establishing a standard so much above ordinary practice. Selfishness is become so predominant a principle, especially among the rich and luxurious, that it gives the mind an uneasy sensation to look up to models of exalted and disinterested virtue. Habits of indulgence cloud the spiritual faculties, and darken those organs of mental vision which should contemplate truth with unobstructed distinctness. Thus, in characters which do not possess one truly heroic virtue, superficial qualities are blindly adopted as substitutes for real grandeur of mind.

But, in pursuing our inquiry into the claims of those princes who have acquired the title of THE GREAT, many difficulties occur. It requires not only clearness of sight, but niceness of position to enable us to determine.—Perhaps the fifty years which the church of Rome wisely ordained should elapse, before she allows inquiries to be made into the characters of her intended saints, previous to their canonization, pass away to an opposite purpose in the case of ambitious princes; and the same period which is required to make a saint would probably unmake a hero, and thus annul the posthumous possession of that claim, which many living kings have put in for the title of *the great.*

From all that we are able to collect of the annals of so obscure a period, it must be allowed, that the emperor Charlemagne appears to have had higher claims to this appellation, than many on whom we have been accustomed to bestow it. But, while this illustrious conqueror gallantly defeated the renowned pagan prince and his Saxons; while he overthrew their temples, destroyed their priests, and abolished their wor-

* We cannot pass over the brilliant passages of Mr. Burke, of which this is a part, without hazarding a censure on the sentiment which closes it. He winds up the paragraph by asserting, that under the old system, 'vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness.' Surely one of the great dangers of vice is its *attractiveness.* Now, is not grossness rather repulsive than attractive? So thought the Spartans, when they exposed their drunken slaves to the eyes of their children. Had Mr. Burke said, that those who add grossness to it make it more odious, it would have been just. Not so, when he declares that its absence mitigates the evil

ship;—while he made kings in one country, and laws in another; while he seems to have governed with justice, as well his hereditary realms as those which he obtained by the sword; while, in a subsequent engagement with the same pagan prince, he not only obtained fresh conquests, but achieved the nobler victory of bringing his captive to embrace Christianity, and to become its zealous defender; while he vigorously executed, in time of peace, those laws which he enacted even in the tumult of war; and while he was the great restorer and patron of letters, though he could not write his name;—and while as Alfred is the boast of the English for having been the founder of their constitution by some of his laws, so the French ascribe to Charlemagne the glory of having suggested, by those learned conferences which he commanded to be held in his presence, the first idea of their academies of sciences and letters;—while he seemed to possess the true notion of royal magnificence, by employing it chiefly as a political instrument;* and though, for his various merits, the ancient Romans would have deified him, and the French historians seem to have done little less:—yet, this destroyer of paganism, this restorer of learning, this founder of cities, laws, schools, colleges, and churches, by the unprovoked murder of near five thousand Saxons, for no other crime but their allegiance to their own legitimate prince, must ever stand excluded, by the Christian censor, from a complete and unqualified right to the appellation of *the great;* a title to which the pretensions of our Alfred, seem to have been, of all princes, the least questionable.

Nor can we dismiss the character of Charlemagne, without producing him as a fresh instance of the political mischief arising from the private vices of princes. The licentiousness of this monarch's conduct, proved an irreparable injury to the state, the number of natural children which he left behind him, being the occasion of long contentions respecting the division of the empire.

In not a few respects the emperor Charles V. possesses a considerable claim to the name of great, while yet there is an invincible flaw in his title.—So eminent in the field as to have equalled the most skilful, and to have vanquished the most successful generals of his age.—So able in the cabinet, that he formed plans with as much wisdom, deliberation, and foresight, as he afterwards executed them with promptitude and vigour; and constantly manifesting a prudence which secured his superiority over his pleasure-loving contemporaries, the unguarded Francis, and the jovial Henry. But his principal claim to greatness arises from that species of wisdom, which his admirable historian allows him to have possessed in the highest degree; that science, which of all others, is the most important in a monarch, 'the exact knowledge of mankind, and the great art of adapting their talents to the departments which he allotted them. So that he employed,' continues Robertson, 'no general in the field, no minister in the cabinet, no ambassador to a foreign court, no governor of a province, whose abilities were inadequate to the trust reposed in him.' Yet, the grandeur of Charles, consisted entirely in the capacity of his mind, without any consonant qualities of the heart. And it was the misfortune of this renowned politician and warrior to fail of the character of true greatness alike when he pursued, and when he renounced human glory; to err, both when he sought happiness in the turmoil of war and politics, and when he at last looked for it, in the quiet shelter of religious retreat. In the latter, his object was indeed far more pure; but his pursuit was almost equally mistaken. In the bustling scenes of life, he was sullen, cruel, insidious, malignant; the terror of mankind by his ambition, the scourge of protestantism by his intolerance. In his solitude he was the tormentor of himself, by unhappily mistaking superstitious observances for repentance, and uncommanded austerities for religion.

Who can figure to himself a more truly pitiable state, than that of a capacious mind, which, after a long possession of the plenitude of power, and an unbounded field for the indulgence of ambition, begins to discover the vanity of its loftiest aims, and actually resolves to renounce its pursuits, but without substituting in its stead any nobler object, without replacing the discarded attachment with any better pursuit, or any higher hope? To abandon what may almost be called the empire of this world, without a well-grounded expectation of happiness in the world to come! To renounce the full-blown honours of earthly glory, without any reasonable hope of that glory which fadeth not away; this perhaps is, of all human conditions, that which excites the deepest commiseration in the bosom of a Christian!

There are few things which more strikingly evince the value of true religion than the despondency and misery experienced by great, but perverted minds, when after a long and successful course of ambition, they are thus brought to a deep feeling of its emptiness. Alexander weeping for more worlds! Dioclesian weary of that imperial power, which had been exercised in acts of tyranny and persecution; abdicating his throne, and retiring to labour in a little garden at Salona forgetting that solitude requires innocence to make it pleasant, and piety to make it profitable! And though the retreat was voluntary, and though he deceived himself in the first moments of novelty, by declaring that he found more pleasure in cultivating cabbages, than in governing Rome; yet, he soon gave the lie to this boast, by terminating his life in a way more congenial to the manner in which it had been spent, by poison, or madness, or, as some assert, by both!—The emperor Charles, after having, for a long series of years, alarmed and agitated Europe by his restless ambition, yet, just when its objects were accomplished, flying to a gloomy retreat, devoting himself to severe austerities, and useless self-discipline, and mournfully acting the weak, but solemn farce of his own living funeral!

How does the reflecting mind regret that these great, but misguided princes, Charles

* See the extraordinary account of Charlemagne's splendid reception of the ambassadors from the emperor of the East.

especially, in whose heart deep remorse seems to have been awakened, should fail finally of that only consolation which could have poured balm into their aching bosoms, and administered relief to their lacerated consciences! Had Charles, instead of closing his days with ignorant and bigoted monks, been surrounded by enlightened Christians, they would have prevented his attempting to heal his wounded spirit by fruitless and unexpiating self-inflictions. Instead of 'laying this flattering unction to his soul,' he might have been led to sound and rational repentance. His weary and heavy-laden spirit might have been conducted thither, where alone true rest is to be found. He might have been directed to the only sure source of pardon for sin, and have closed his guilty and perturbed life with a hope full of immortality. Peace might have been restored to his mind, not by lessening his sense of his own offences, but on the only true ground, by exalting the mercies of God, as displayed in the Christian dispensation.

It must be confessed, however, that there seems to be something sublime in the motive of his abdication, as far as related to himself. Yet, might he not far better have made his peace with heaven, by remaining on a throne, where he would have retained the power of making some compensation to the world, for the wrongs which he had done it; and of holding out his protection to the reformed faith, of which he had been so unrelenting an enemy, and to which his dying sentiments are suspected to have been favourable?

From a view of such striking examples, one important lesson is held out to princes, in the bloom of life, who have yet their path to choose in the world that lies before them. It is this.—Though it is good to repent of ambition and injustice, it is still better never to have been guilty of either.

If we were to estimate the true greatness of a prince, not so much by the virtues attached to his own personal character, as by the effects which the energy of that character, produced on the most enormous empire in the world, there is, perhaps, no monarch, ancient or modern, who could produce a fairer claim to the title of great, than Peter the first, emperor of Russia. It was said of Augustus, that he had found Rome built of brick, and had left it of marble. It may be said, with more truth of Peter, that he found Muscovy a land of savages, and left it a land of men; of beings at least rapidly advancing, in consequence of his exertions, to that character.

This monarch early gave many of those sure indications, of a great capacity, which consist in catching from the most trivial circumstances hints for the most important enterprises. The casual sight of a Dutch vessel from a summer house on one of his lakes, suggested at once to his creative mind the first idea of the navy of Russia.—The accidental discourse of a foreigner, of no great note, in which he intimated that there were countries in a state of knowledge, light, and comfort, totally dissimilar to the barbarism and misery of Russia, kindled in the czar an instantaneous wish to see and judge of this difference for himself; not merely as a matter of curiosity, but with a resolution to bring home whatever advantages he might find abroad. With the same instinctive greatness, his natural dread of the sea, which was extreme, was made at once to give way, when voyages of improvement were to be made abroad, or a marine established at home.

Having resolved to procure for his country this necessary instrument of strength and defence, a navy; fired by true genius and genuine patriotism, he quitted for a time his throne and country, not like Sesostris, Alexander, or Cæsar, to despoil other nations, but to acquire the best means of improving his own. Not like Nero, to fiddle to the Athenians; not like Dioclesian to raise coleworts in Dalmatia; nor like Charles V. to bury himself in a monastic cell in Spain, torturing his body for the sins of his soul; not like Christina, to discuss at Rome, and intrigue at Versailles;—but having formed the grand design of giving laws, civilization, and commerce to his vast unwieldy territory; and being aware that the brutal ignorance of his barbarous subjects wanted to be both stimulated and instructed; he quitted his throne for a time only that he might return more worthy to fill it. He travelled not to feast his eyes with pictures, or his ears with music, nor to dissolve his mind in pleasures, but to study laws, politics, and arts. Not only to scrutinize men and manners with the eye of a politician, which would have sufficed for a monarch of a polished state; but, remembering that he reigned over a people rude, even in the arts of ordinary life, he magnanimously stooped, not only to study, but to practice them himself. He not only examined docks and arsenals with the eye of an engineer, but laboured in them with the hand of a mechanic. He was a carpenter in Holland, a shipwright in Britain, a pilot in both. His pleasures had a relish of his labours. The king of England, apprised of his taste, entertained him, not with a masquerade, but a naval combat. Previous to this, he had entered upon his military career in Russia, where he set out by taking the lowest situation in his own regiment, and would accept no rank, but as he obtained it by deserving it. Accordingly, he filled successively every station in the army from the drummer to the general; intending hereby to give his proud and ignorant nobility a living lesson, that desert was the only true road to military distinctions.

We must not determine on the greatness of a sovereign's character entirely by the degree of civilization, morals, and knowledge, which his people may be found to have reached after his death: but, in order to do full justice to his character, we must exactly appreciate the state in which he found, as well as that in which he left them. For though they may be still far behind the subjects of neighbouring states, yet that measure of progress which they will have made, under such a monarch as Peter, will reflect greater honour on the king, than will be due to the sovereign of a much more improved people, who finds them already settled in habits of decency and order, and in an advanced state of arts, manners and knowledge.

The genius of Peter was not a visionary ge-

nius, indulging romantic ideas of chimerical perfection, but it was a great practical understanding, realizing by its energy whatever his genius had conceived. Patient under difficulties, cheerful even under the loss of battles, from the conviction that the rough implements, with which he must hereafter work his way to victory, could only learn to conquer by being first defeated, he considered every action in which he was worsted, as a school for his barbarians. It was this perseverance under failures, which paved the way for the decisive victory at Pultowa, the consummation of his military character. His conduct to the Swedish officers, his prisoners, was such as would have done honour to a general of the most polished state.

He manifested another indisputable proof of greatness in his constant preference of utility to splendor; and in his indifference to show and decoration. The qualities which this prince threw away, as beneath the attention of a great mind, were precisely such as a tinsel hero would pick up, on which to build the reputation of greatness. The shreds and parings of Peter would make a Louis.

With this truly vigorous and original mind, with an almost unparalleled activity and zeal, constantly devoted to all the true ends which a patriot king will ever keep in view—it is yet but too obvious, why the emperor Peter failed of completely deserving the title of *the great*. This monarch presents a fresh exemplification of the doctrine which we have so frequently brought forward, the use which Providence makes of erring men to accomplish great purposes. He affords a melancholy instance how far a prince 'may reform a people, without reforming himself.' A remark, indeed, which Peter had the honesty and good sense to make, but without having the magnanimity to profit by his own observation. Happy for society that such instruments are raised up! Happy were it for themselves, if a still higher principle directed their exertions; and if, in so essentially serving mankind, they afforded a reasonable ground of hope, that they had saved themselves!

This monarch, who like Alexander, perpetuated his name by a superb city which he built: who refined barbarism into policy, who so far tamed the rugged genius of an almost polar clime, as not only to plant arts and manufactures, but colleges, academies, libraries, and observatories, in that frozen soil, which had hitherto scarcely given any signs of intellectual life! who improved, not only the condition of the people, but the state of the church, and considerably raised its religion, which was before scarcely Christianity;—this founder, this patriot, this reformer, was himself intemperate and violent, sensual and cruel, a slave to passions and appetites as gross as could have been indulged by the rudest of his Muscovites before he had civilized them!

If the true grandeur of a prince consists not in adding to his territory by conquests; not in enriching it by plunder; not in adorning it by treasures wrung from the hard hand of industry; but in converting a neglected waste into a cultivated country; in peopling and rendering fruitful a land desolated by long calamities: in preserving peace in his small state, when all the great states of Europe were ravaged by war; in restoring plenty to a famished people, and raising a depressed nobility to affluence; in paying the debts of a ruined gentry, and giving portions to their daughters; in promoting virtue, literature, and science; in making it the whole object of his reign to render his subjects richer, happier, and better than he found them; in declaring that *he would not reign a moment longer than he thought he could be doing good to his people*, —then was Leopold, sovereign of the small dukedom of Lorrain, more justly entitled to the appellation of *the great*, than the Alexanders, the Cæsars, and the Louises, who filled the page of history with praises, and the world with tears.*

If Gustavus Adolphus put in his undisputed claim to the title of *the great*, it is not merely on the ground of his glorious victories at the battle of Leipsic and Lutzen, but because that amidst the din of arms, and the tumult of those battles, he was never diverted from snatching some portion of every day for prayer, and reading the Scriptures. It is because, with all his high spirits, he was so far from thinking that it derogated from the dignity of a gentleman, or the honour of an officer, to refuse a challenge, that he punished with death whoever presumed to decide a quarrel with the sword; to prevent the necessity of which, he made a law that all disputes should be settled by a court of honour.† He deserved the appellation of *great*, when he wished to carry commerce to the West Indies, that he might carry thither also by those means, the pure doctrines of the reformation. He deserved it, when he invited by an edict all the persecuted protestants from every part of Europe, to an asylum in Sweden, offering them not only an immunity from taxes, but full permission to return home when the troubles of their respective countries should be healed.

When such was the union of piety and heroism in the gallant monarch himself, it was the less wonderful to find the same rare combination in the associates of his triumphs. Hence the pious *meditations* of the celebrated leader of the Scotch brigade‡ in the service of Gustavus! Compositions of which would be scarcely a discredit to a father of the church, and which exalts his character as highly in a religious and moral view, as it was raised, by his bravery and skill in war, in the annals of military glory.

If Alexander deserved the title in question it was when he declared in a letter to his immortal master, that *he thought it a truer glory to excel in knowledge than in power*. It was in that equally moral and poetical reprehension of those flatterers who had ascribed divine honours to him, when, on the bleeding of his wounds, he said, *Look! this is my blood! This is not that*

* See Siecle de Louis XIV. for a fuller account of Leopold.

† The king of France, at this same military period, severely prohibited duelling, the practice of which he was so far from considering as an indication of courage, that he took a solemn oath to bestow rewards on such military men as had *the courage to refuse a challenge*. It was an indication that this prince understood wherein true magnanimity consisted. See also sir Francis Bacon's charge, when attorney general against duels.

‡ Munro.

divine liquor of which Homer speaks, which ran from the hand of Venus when Diomedes pierced it! His generous treatment of the family of the conquered Darius was, perhaps, eclipsed by the equally magnanimous, and more disinterested moderation of our own heroic Edward, the black prince, to the captive king of France. The gallant prince seems to have merited, without obtaining the appellation of *the great*.

But, if splendid parade, and costly magnificence be really considered as unequivocal proofs of exalted greatness, then must the Trajans, the Gustavuses, the Alfreds, the Peters, the Williams, and the Elizabeths, submit their claims to this appellation to those of Louis XIV. Louis himself must, without contest, yield the palm of greatness to pope Alexander the sixth, and Cæsar Borgia; and they, in their turn, must hide their diminished heads, in reverence to the living exhibitor of the late surpassing pomp and unparalleled pageantry in a neighbouring nation, displayed in the most gorgeous and costly farce that was ever acted before the astonished and indignant world!

If, to use the very words of the historian and panegyrist of Louis, 'to despoil, disturb, and humble almost all the states of Europe,'—if this appeared in the eyes of that panegyrist a proof of greatness; in the eye of reason and humanity, such a course of conduct will rather appear insolence, injustice, and oppression. Yet, as such irreligious authors commonly connect the idea of glory with that of success, they themselves ought not to vindicate it even on their own principle of *expediency;* since this passion for false glory, carried to the last excess, became, at length, the means of stirring up the other European powers; the result of whose confederacy terminated in the disgrace of Louis.

If ever this vain-glorious prince appeared truly *great*, it was in his dying speech to his infant successor, when, taking him in his arms, he magnanimously intreated him not to follow his example, in his love of wars and his taste for expense; exhorting him to follow moderate counsels, to fear God, reduce the taxes, spare his subjects, and to do whatever he himself had not done to relieve them.

In like manner, our illustrious Henry V. in the midst of his French conquests, conquests founded on injustice (unpopular as is the assertion to an English ear) never so truly deserved to be called the *great* as in that beautiful instance of his reverence for the laws, when he submitted, as prince of Wales, to the magistrate who put him under confinement for some irregularities; as when, afterwards, being sovereign, he not only pardoned, but commended and promoted him.

If ever Henry IV. of France, peculiarly deserved the appellation of *great*, it was after the victory at Coutras, for that noble magnanimity in the very moment of conquest, which compelled a pious divine, then present, to exclaim—'Happy and highly favoured of heaven is that prince, who sees at his feet his enemies humbled by the hand of God; his table surrounded by his prisoners, his room hung with the ensigns of the vanquished without the slightest emotion of vanity or insolence! who can maintain in the midst of such glorious successes, the same moderation with which he has borne the severest adversity!'—He deserved it, when as he was besieging Paris, which was perishing with famine, he commanded the besiegers to admit supplies to the besieged.—He deserved it at the battle of Irvi, not when he gallantly ordered his soldiers to follow his white plume, which would be the signal of victory, nor afterwards when that victory was complete; but it was, when just before the engagement, he made a solemn renunciation of his own might and his own wisdom, and submitted the event to God in this incomparable prayer.

'O Lord God of Hosts, who hast in thy hand all events; if thou knowest that my reign will promote thy glory, and the safety of thy people; if thou knowest that I have no other ambition, but to advance the honour of thy name, and the good of the state, favour O great God, the justice of my arms. But if thy good Providence has decreed otherwise; if thou seest that I should prove one of those kings whom thou givest in thine anger; take from me, O merciful God, my life and my crown. Make me this day a sacrifice to thy will; let my death end the calamities of my country, and let my blood be the last that shall be spilt in this quarrel.'—

O si sic omnia!

CHAP. XXVIII.

Books.

'Conversation, says the sagacious Verulam, 'makes a *ready* man.' It is, indeed, one of the practical ends of study. It draws the powers of the understanding into exercise, and brings into circulation the treasures which the memory has been amassing. Conversation will be always an instrument particularly important in the cultivation of those talents which may one day be brought into public exercise. And as it would not be easy to start profitable topics of discourse between the pupil and those around her, without inviting some little previous introduction, it might not be useless to suggest a simple preparation for the occasional discussion of topics, somewhat above the ordinary cast of familiar intercourse.

To burthen the memory with a load of dry matter would, on the one hand, be dull; and with a mass of poetry, which she can have little occasion to use, would, on the other, be superfluous. But, as the understanding opens, and years advance, might she not occasionally commit to memory, from the best authors in every department, one select passage, one weighty sentence, one striking precept, which in the hours devoted to society and relaxation, might form a kind of thesis for interesting conversation? For instance, a short specimen of eloquence from South, or of reasoning from Barrow; a detached reflection on the analogy of religion to the constitution of nature from Butler; a political character from Clarendon; a maxim of prudence from the proverbs; a precept of government from Bacon; a moral document from the Ram-

bler; a passage of ancient history from Plutarch; a sketch of national manners from Goldsmith's Traveller, or of individual character from the Vanity of Human Wishes; an aphorism on the contempt of riches from Seneca, or a paragraph on the wealth of nations from Adam Smith; a rule of conduct from sir Mathew Hale, or a sentiment of benevolence from Mr. Addison; a devout contemplation from bishop Hall, or a principle of taste from Quintilian; an opinion on the law of nations from Vattel, or on the law of England from Blackstone.

Might not any one of the topics thus suggested by the recitation of a single passage, be made the ground of a short rational conversation, without the formality of a debate, or the solemnity of an academical disputation? Persons naturally get a custom of reading with more sedulous attention, when they expect to be called upon to produce the substance of what they have read; and in order to prevent desultory and unsettled habits, it would be well on these occasions, to tie the mind down to the one selected topic, and not to allow it to wander from the point under consideration. This practice, steadily observed would strengthen the faculties of thinking, and reasoning, and consequently highly improve the powers of conversation.

Of books, a considerable number, besides those in the foregoing passage, has already been suggested. But though we have ventured to recommend many works which seemed peculiarly applicable to the present purpose, we do not presume to point out any thing like a systematic course of reading. This will be arranged by far abler judges, especially in that most important instance, the choice of books of divinity. In a language so abounding as the English in the treasures of theological composition, the difficulty will consist, not in finding much that is excellent, but in selecting that which unites the most excellences.

Of elementary books which teach the first rudiments of Christianity, there is no doubt but the best use has been already made. In aid of these, the deepest and most impressive knowledge will be communicated to the mind, by familiar colloquial explanation of every portion of Scripture, daily, as it is read. Such an habitual, and, at the same time, clear and simple exposition, would tend to do away the most material of those difficulties and obscurities, with which the sacred writings are charged, and which are pleaded as a reason for not putting them, in their genuine form, into the hands of youth. There is no book whatever which affords more matter for interesting and animated conversation, and for variety, there is no book which is at all comparable to it. It were to be wished that the sacred volume were not too generally made to give way to histories and expositions of the Bible. These last are excellent subordinate aids; but it is to be feared that they are sometimes almost exclusively adopted, to the neglect of the Bible itself. Thus the mere facts and incidents being retained, separated from the doctrines, sentiments, and precepts which, like a golden thread, run through every part of the history, and are every where interwoven with its texture; and the narrative being also stripped of its venerable phraseology and touching style, the Bible is robbed of its principal charm; and the devotional and historical ideas being thus separated, the impression both on the memory and the feelings becomes much weakened.—Our remarks on the Scripture itself we shall reserve for a future chapter.

It has been a rule observed throughout this work, to forbear naming living authors, except incidentally in one or two instances. This rule, which was adopted from delicacy, is at present become inconvenient, as it prevents our giving highly merited commendation to various religious works, of almost every description; to critical as well as practical elucidations of Scripture;—to treatises on the internal principles, and on the duties of religion; on the efficacy, as well as the evidences of Christianity;—works not less admirable in point of composition, than estimable for their substantial worth; and which will inevitably be adopted, as the royal education advances.

We would only presume to offer one remark on the study of divines, whether ancient or modern. A luminous style, and a perspicuous expression, will cast a lustre on the brightest truths, and render grave and serious subjects more engaging and impressive. To the young, these attractions are particularly necessary. Yet, in the discourses to be perused, one principle of selection should be observed. The graces of language should never be considered as an equivalent for a sound principle. Dissertations or sermons, should not be preferred for having more smoothness than energy, for being more alluring than awakening, nor because they are calculated to make the reader satisfied rather than safe. The distinguishing characters of Christianity, both in doctrine and practice, should always be considered as the most indispensable requisite.—For the absence of the great fundamental truths of our religion, no ingenuity of thought, no elegance of style, no popularity of the author can atone. A splendid diction is a pleasing ornament, but it should never be used as an instrument for lowering the standard of religious truth. Happily we are not wanting in divines, living and dead, who unite all the required excellences.

Of moral writers we shall speak hereafter. Next to history, biography must be considered as useful. Those who have properly selected, and judiciously written the lives of eminent persons, have performed the office of instruction, without assuming the dignity of instructors. Well-chosen, and well-written lives would form a valuable substitute for no small portion of those works of imagination, which steal away the hearts and time of our youth. Novels, were there no other objection to them, however ingeniously they may be written, as they exhibit only fictitious characters, acting in fictitious scenes, on fictitious occasions, and being sometimes the work of writers, who rather *guess* what the world is than describe it from their own knowledge, can never give so just or vivid a picture of life and manners, as is to be found in the memoirs of men who were actual performers on the great stage of the world. We may apply, to many of these fabricators of fil-

ventures what lord Bacon says, when he regrets that philosophers, ignorant of real business, chose to write about legislation, instead of statesmen, whose proper office it was.—'They make,' says he, 'imaginary laws for imaginary commonwealths.'

Of this engaging species of literature, biography, it is to be regretted, that we do not possess more lives of distinguished men, written with a view to moral instruction, in the manner of those of bishop Burnet, and Isaac Walton. The lives of the bishop are seriously instructive, as well as highly interesting. Of Walton's it is difficult to say, whether they are more amusing or informing.

Voyages and travels will also form a very necessary class of books; but some of the more recent works of this kind are so interlarded with infidelity, and under the mask of ridiculing popery, aim such mischievous side-strokes at Christianity itself; and many, especially of the modern French travels, are exceptionable, not only for their impiety, but also on so many other accounts, that they will require to be selected with the nicest discrimination. Our own language, however, can boast many valuable works of this kind, which are clear of these offences. Voyages of discovery, though perhaps less interesting to ordinary readers will be peculiarly suited to the royal pupil; especially those which have been undertaken, greatly to his honour, by command of his present majesty, and which contain the discoveries actually made in the hitherto unexplored parts of the southern hemisphere.

Telemachus.

Among works of imagination, there are some peculiarly suited to the royal pupil. She should never, it is presumed, peruse any authors below those who have always been considered, as standards in their respective departments. With the talents which she is said to possess, she will soon be competent to understand great part of a work, which, though it ranks in the very first class of this species of composition, has, it is to be feared, fallen into unjust disregard from its having been injudiciously employed by teachers as the first book in acquiring the French language. The fine sentiments which it contains have been overlooked, while only the facility of the style has been considered.—Telemachus is a noble political romance, delightful to every reader, but specifically adapted to what indeed was its original object, the formation of a character of a prince. It is free from the moral defects of the classic poets, whose very deities are commonly exhibited with a grossness dangerous to the modesty of youth. Fenelon, while with a true taste, he never puts any thing into their mouths incompatible with the Grecian fable, never fails to give the imperfect pagan moral a tincture of Christian purity. The finest precepts are illustrated by the most instructive examples; and every royal duty is, as it were, personified. His morality is every where founded on the eternal principles of truth and justice. He refers all goodness to God, as its origin and end. He exhibits a uniform lesson of the duty of sacrificing private interest to public good, and of forgetting ourselves in the love of our country. He reconciles the soundest policy with the most undeviating integrity, and puts to shame those otherwise admirable writers of our own time, who have laboured to establish the dangerous doctrine of *expediency* at the expense of immutable justice and everlasting truth. From Telemachus she will learn, that the true glory of a king is to make his people good and happy; that his authority is never so secure as when it is founded on the love of his subjects; and that the same principles which promote private virtue, advance public happiness. He teaches carefully to distinguish between good and bad governments; delivers precepts for the philosophical, the warlike, the pacific, and the legislative king; and shows the comparative value of agriculture, of commerce, of education, and of arts; of private justice, and of civil polity. His descriptions, comparisons, and narratives, instead of being merely amusing, are always made to answer some beneficial purpose. And, as there is no part of public duty, so there is scarcely any circumstance of private conduct, which has been overlooked. The dangers of self-confidence; the contempt of virtuous counsels; the perils of favouritism; the unworthiness of ignoble pursuits; the mischiefs of disproportionate connexions; the duty of inviolable fidelity to engagements, of moderation under the most prosperous, and of firmness under the most adverse circumstances; of patience and forbearance, of kindness and gratitude; all these are not so much animadverted on, as exemplified in the most impressive instances.

Children love fiction. It is often a misleading taste. Of this taste Fenelon has availed himself, to convey, under the elegant shelter of the Greek mythology, sentiments and opinions which might not otherwise so readily have made their way to the heart. The strict maxims of government, and high standard of public virtue, exhibited in Telemachus, excited in the jealous mind of the reigning king of France, a dread that if those notions should become popular, that work would hereafter be considered as a satire on his own conduct and government, on his fondness for grandeur, for pleasure, for glory, and for war: so that it has been supposed probable, that Fenelon's theological works, for which he was disgraced, were only made the pretext for punishing him for his political writings.

The Cyropædia of Xenophon it may be thought out of date to recommend; but genius and virtue are never antiquated. This work may be read with advantage, not as an entirely authentic history, which is a more than doubtful point, but as a valuable moral work, exhibiting a lively image of royal virtue and showing, in almost all respects, what a sovereign ought to be.—The *princes* of Xenophon and of Fenelon are models. The 'Prince' of Machiavel is a being elaborately trained in every art of political and moral corruption. The lives of the pupils are the best comments on the works of the respective authors. Fenelon produced 'Telemaque' and the duke of Burgundy.—Machiavel, 'Il Principe' and Cæsar Borgia!

CHAP. XXIX.

Of periodical essay writers, particularly Addison and Johnson.

To hardly any species of composition has the British public been more signally indebted than to the periodical Essay; and, perhaps, it was only from the British press, that such a publication could have issued. The attempt to excite mental appetite, by furnishing, from day to day, intellectual aliment of such peculiar freshness, must have been fatally obstructed by any jealousy of superintendance, or formality of licensing. The abuse of the press is to be deplored as a calamity, and punished as a crime. But let neither prince nor people forget the providential blessings which have been derived to both from its constitutional liberty. As this was one of the invaluable effects of the revolution in 1688, so perhaps no other means more contributed to carry the blessings of that period to their consummate establishment, in the accession of the house of Brunswick.

The two writers who have most eminently distinguished themselves in this path of literature, are Addison and Johnson. At a period when religion was held in more than usual contempt, from its having been recently abused to the worst purposes; and when the higher walks of life still exhibited that dissoluteness which the profligate reign of the second Charles had made so deplorably fashionable, Addison seems to have been raised by Providence for the double purpose of improving the public taste, and correcting the public morals. As the powers of the imagination had, in the preceding period, been peculiarly abused to the purposes of vice, it was Addison's great object to show that wit and impurity had no necessary connexion. He not only evinced this by his reasonings, but he so exemplified it in his own compositions, as to become in a short time more generally useful, by becoming more popular than any English writer who had yet appeared. This well-earned celebrity he endeavoured to turn to the best of all purposes; and his success was such as to prove, that genius is never so advantageously employed as in the service of virtue, nor influence so well directed as in rendering piety fashionable. At this distance, when almost all authors have written the better, because Addison wrote first, and when the public taste which he refined has become competent through that refinement, to criticise its benefactor, it is not easy fully to appreciate the value of Addison. To do this, we must attend to the progress of English literature, and make a comparison between him and his predecessors.

But noble as the views of Addison were, and happily as he has, in general, accomplished what he intended; the praise which justly belongs to him must be qualified by the avowal, that it does not extend to every passage he has written. From the pernicious influence of those very manners which it was his object to correct, some degree of taint has occasionally affected his own pages, which will make it necessary to guard the royal pupil from a wholly promiscuous perusal. It is however, but justice to add, that the few instances referred to, however exceptionable, are of such a kind as to expose him to the charge rather of inadvertence, or momentary levity, than of any unfixedness of principle, much less of any depravity of heart.

Of all the periodical works, those of Johnson, in point of strict and undeviating moral purity, unquestionably stand highest. Every page is invariably delicate. It is, therefore, the rare praise of this author, that the most vigilant preceptor may commit his voluminous works into the hands of even his female pupil, without caution, limitation, or reserve: secure that she cannot stumble on a pernicious sentiment, or rise from the perusal with the slightest taint of immorality. Even in his dictionary, moral rectitude has not only been scrupulously maintained, but, as far as the nature of the work would admit, it has been assiduously inculcated. In the authorities which he had adduced, he has collected, with a discrimination which can never be enough admired, a countless multitude of the most noble sentences which English literature afforded; yet he has frequently contented himself with instances borrowed from inferior writers, when he found some passage, which at once served *his* purpose, and that of religion and morality; and also, as he declared himself, lest he should risk contaminating the mind of the student, by referring him to authors of more celebrity, but less purity. When we reflect how fatally the unsuspected title of *Dictionary* has been made the vehicle for polluting principle, we shall feel the value of this extreme conscientiousness of Johnson.

Still, however, while we ascribe to this excellent author all that is safe, and all that is just, it is less from Johnson than from Addison that we derive the interesting lessons of life and manners; that we learn to trace the exact delineations of character, and to catch the vivid hues, and varied tints of nature. It is true, that every sentence of the more recent moralist is an aphorism, every paragraph a chain of maxims for guiding the understanding and guarding the heart. But when Johnson describes *characters*, he rather exhibits vice and virtue in the abstract, the real existing human being: while Addison presents you with actual men and women; real life figures, compounded of the faults and the excellencies, the wisdom and the weaknesses, the follies and the virtues of humanity.—By the Avarus, the Ebulus, the Misellus, the Sophron, the Zosima, and the Viator of Johnson, we are instructed in the soundest truths, but we are not struck by any vivid exemplification. We merely *hear* them, and we hear them with profit, but we do not *know* them. Whereas with the members of the Spectator's club we are *acquainted*. Johnson's personages are elaborately carved figures that fill the niches of the saloon; Addison's are the living company which animate it: Johnson's have more drapery; Addison's more countenance, Johnson's gentlemen and ladies, scholars and chambermaids, philosophers and coquets, all argue syllogistically, all converse in the same academic language; divide all their sentences into the same triple members, turn every

phrase with the same measured solemnity, and round every period with the same polished smoothness. Addison's talk learnedly or lightly, think deeply, or prate flippantly, in exact accordance with their character, station, and habits of life.

What reader, when he meets with the description of Sir Roger de Coverly, or Will Wimble, or of the Tory fox-hunter in the Freeholder does not frame in his own mind a living image in each, to which ever after he naturally recurs, and on which his recollection, if we may so speak, rather than his imagination, fastens, as on an old intimate? The lapse of a century, indeed, has induced a considerable change in modes of expression and forms of behaviour. But though manners are mutable, human nature is permanent. And it can no more be brought as a charge against the truth of Addison's characters that the manners are changed, than it can be produced against the portraits of sir Peter Lely and Vandyck, that the fashions of dress are altered. The human character, like the human figure, is the same in all ages; it is only the exterior and the costume which vary. Grace of attitude, exquisite proportion, and striking resemblance, do not diminish of their first charm, because ruffs, perukes, satin doublets, and slashed sleeves are passed away. Addison's characters may be likened to that expressive style of drawing, which gives the exact contour by a few careless strokes of the pencil. They are rendered amusing, by being in some slight degree carricatures; yet, all is accurate resemblance, nothing is wanton aggravation. They have, in short, that undiscribable grace which will always captivate the reader in proportion to the delicacy of his own perceptions.

Among the benefits which have resulted from the writings of Addison, the attention first drawn to Paradise Lost by his criticisms was not one of the least. His examination of that immortal work, the boast of our island, and of human nature, had the merit of subduing the violence of party-prejudice, and of raising its great author to an eminence in the minds of his countrymen, corresponding to that which he actually held, and will hold, on the scale of genius, till time shall be no more.*

If the critical writings of Addison do not possess the acuteness of Dryden, or the vigour of Johnson, they are familiar and elegant, and serve to prepare the mind for more elaborate investigation. If it be objected, that he deals too much in gratuitous praise and vague admiration, it may be answered, that the effect produced by poetry on the mind cannot always be philosophically accounted for; and Addison was too fair, and, in this instance, too cordial a critic to withhold expressions of delight, merely because he could not analyse the causes which produced it.—At any rate, it must be allowed, that he who wrote those exquisite *Essays on the Pleasures of the Imagination*, could not be superficial through penury. It is allowed, that the criticisms of Johnson are, in general, much more systematic; they possess more depth, as well as more discrimination; but they are less pleasing, because they are not equally good natured. They are more tinctured with party spirit, and breathe less generous and voluntary admiration. But no critic has been more successful in laying open the internal structure of the poet;—though he now and then handles the knife so roughly as to disfigure what he means to dissect. His learning was evidently much deeper, as well as better digested, than that of Addison, and the energy of his understanding was almost unrivalled. He therefore, discovers a rare ability in appreciating, with the soundest and most sagacious scrutiny, the poetry of reason and good sense; in the composition of which he also excels.—But to the less bounded excursions of high imagination, to the bolder achievements of pure invention he is less just, because less sensible. He appears little alive to that species of writing, whose felicities consist in ease and grace, to the floating forms of ideal beauty, to the sublimer flights of the lyric muse, or to finer touches of dramatic excellence. He would consequently be cold in his approbation, not to say perverse in his discussion of some of these species of beauty, of which, in fact, his feelings were less susceptible.

He had, however, that higher perfection which has been too rarely associated with those faculties, the most discerning taste and the liveliest relish, for the truest as well as the noblest species of the sublime and beautiful. I mean that which belongs to moral excellence. Where this was obvious, it not only conquered his aversion, but attracted his warm affection. It was this which made him the ardent eulogist of Watts, in spite of his non-conformity, and even the advocate of Blackmore, whom it must have been natural for him to despise as a bad poet, and to hate as a whig. It is this best of tastes which he also most displays in that beautiful eulogium of Addison, to which in the present comparison, it would be injustice to both, not to refer the reader.

His *Tour to the Hebrides* exhibits a delightful specimen of an intellectual traveller, who extracts beauty from barrenness, and builds up a solid mass of instruction with the most slender materials. He leaves to the writer of natural history, whose proper province it is, to run over the world in quest of mosses and grasses, of minerals and fossils. Nor does he swell his book with catalogues of pictures which have neither novelty nor relevancy; nor does he copy, from

* Milton has dropt his mantle on a poet, inferior indeed to himself, in the loftiness of his conceptions, the variety of his learning, and the structure of his verse; but the felicity of whose genius is only surpassed by the elevation of his piety; whose devout effusions are more penetrating, and almost equally sublime; and who, in his moral and pathetic strokes, familiar illusions, and touching incidents, comes more home to the bosom than even his immortal master. When we observe of this fine spirit that he felt the beauties of nature with a lover's heart, beheld them with a poet's eye, and delineated them with a painter's hand;—that the minute accuracy of his lesser figures, and the exquisite finishing of his rural groups, delight the fancy, as much as the sublimity of his nobler images exalt the mind;—that in spite of faults and negligencies, and a few instances of ungraceful asperity, he gratifies the judgment as much as he enchants the imagination: that he directs the feelings to virtue, and the heart to heaven. Need we designate the sketch by affixing to it the name of Cowper.

preceding authors, the ancient history of a country of which we only want to know the existing state; nor does he convert the grand scenes which display the wonder of the Creator's power into doubts of his existence, or disbelief of his government: but fulfilling the office of an inquisitive and moral traveller, he presents a lively and interesting view of men and things; of the country which he visited, and of the persons with whom he conversed. And though his inveterate Scottish prejudices now and then break out, his spleen seems rather to have been exercised against trees than men. Towards the latter, his seeming illiberality has in reality more of merriment than malice. In his heart he respected that brave and learned nation.—When he is unfair, his unfairness is often mitigated by some stroke of humour, perhaps of good humour, which effaces the impression of his severity. Whatever faults may be found in the Tour to the Hebrides, it is no small thing, at this period, to possess a book of travels entirely pure from the lightest touch of vanity or impurity, of levity or impiety.

His Rasselas is a work peculiarly adapted to the royal pupil; and though it paints human life in too dark shades, and dwells despondingly on the unattainableness of human happiness, these defects will afford excellent occasions for the sagacious preceptor to unfold, through what pursuits life may be made happy by being made useful; by what superinduced strength the burthens of this mortal state may be cheerfully borne, and by what a glorious perspective its termination may be brightened.

The praise which has been given to Addison as an essayist can rarely be extended to many of his coadjutors. Talent more or less we every where meet with, and very ingenious sketches of character; but moral delicacy is so often, and sometimes so shamefully violated, that (whatever may have been the practice,) the Spectator ought to be accounted an unfit book for the indiscriminate perusal of youth.*

However the collection of periodical papers, entitled *The Freeholder*, may be passed over by common readers, it would be unpardonable not to direct to them the attention of a royal pupil. The object at which they aim, the strengthening of the Hanoverian cause against the combined efforts of the house of Stuart and the French court, makes them interesting; and they exhibit an exquisite specimen of political zeal without political acrimony. They abound in strokes of wit; and the Tory Fox-hunter is perhaps next to the Rural Knight in the Spectator, one of the most entertaining descriptions of character in our language. Of these, as well as of his other essays, it may be said, that in them the follies, the affectations, and the absurdities of life are pourtrayed with the lightest touches of the most delicate pencil; that never was ridicule more nicely pointed, nor satire more playfully inoffensive.

In the *Guardian* there is hardly any thing that is seriously exceptionable; and this work is enriched with some essays that are not to be placed beneath even those of Addison. It will be obvious, that we allude to the papers ascribed to bishop Berkeley. These essays bear the marks of a mind at once vigorous and correct, deep in reflection, and opulent in imagery. They are chiefly directed against the free-thinkers, a name by which the infidels of that age chose to call themselves. And never, perhaps, has that wretched character been more admirably illustrated than in the simile of the fly on St. Paul's cathedral.

Another difference between Addison and Johnson is, that the periodical writings of the former are those in which the powers of his mind appear to most advantage. Not so in the case of Johnson. Solidly valuable as the Rambler must be accounted in the point of celebrity, it probably owes much more to its author than it has conferred on him. A forbidding stateliness, a rigid and yet inflated style, an almost total absence of ease and cheerfulness, would too probably bring neglect on the great and various excellencies of these volumes, if they had been the single work of their author. But his other writings, and, above all, that inexhaustible fund of pleasure and profit, the Lives of the Poets, will secure perpetuated attention to every work which bears the name of Johnson. On the ground of distinct attractiveness, the Idler is the most engaging of Johnson's perodical works: the manner being less severe, and the matter more amusing.

The *Adventurer*, perhaps, on account of its interesting tales, and affecting narratives, is, of all others of its class, the most strictly suitable to youth. It also contains much general knowledge, elegant criticism, and various kinds of pleasing information. In almost all these works, the Eastern Tales, Allegories, and Visions, are interesting in the narrative, elevated in the sentiment; pure in the descriptions, and sublime in the moral; they convey lessons peculiarly appropriated to the great, most of the fictitious personages who are made the vehicles of instruction, being either princes or statesmen.

If we advert to religion, the praise of Addison in this infinitely important instance must not be omitted. Johnson never *loses sight* of religion; but on very few occasions does he particularly dwell upon it. In one or two passages* only has he given vent to his religious feelings; and his sentiments are so soundly, indeed so sublimely excellent, that it is impossible not to regret the scantiness with which he has afforded them. But Addison seems to delight in the subject, and, what is remarkable, his devout feelings seem to have much transcended his theological accuracy. To the latter, exception might justly be taken in one or two instances;† to the former, never. If it were to be asked, where are the elevating, ennobling, felicitating effects of religion on the human mind as safely stated, and as happily expressed, as in any English author? perhaps a juster answer could scarcely be given than—*in the devotional papers of Addison.*

* Happily all Addison's papers have been selected by Tickell, in his edition of Addison's works.

* Number VII. in the Rambler; paper on affliction in the Idler; and the noble passage in the account of Iona.

† See particularly that very exceptionable paper in the Spectator, No. 459.—Also another on Superstition and Enthusiasm.

CHAP. XXX.

Books of Amusement.

As the royal person will hereafter require books of amusement, as well as instruction, it will be a task of no small delicacy to select such as may be perused with as much profit, and as little injury, as is to be expected from works of mere entertainment. Perhaps there are few books which possess the power of delighting the fancy, without conveying any dangerous lesson to the heart, equally with Don Quixote.

It does not belong to our subject to animadvert on its leading excellence; that incomparable delicacy of satire, those unrivalled powers of ridicule, which had sufficient force to reclaim the corrupted taste, and sober the distempered imagination of a whole people. This, which on its first appearance was justly considered as its predominant merit, is now become less interesting; because the evil which it assailed no longer existing, the medicine which cured the mad is grown less valuable to the same; yet Don Quixote will be entitled to admiration on imperishable grounds.

Though Cervantes wrote between two and three hundred years ago, and for a people of a national turn of thinking dissimilar to ours; yet that *right good sense*, which is of all ages, and all countries, and which pervades this work more almost than even its exquisite wit and humour; those masterly portraits of character; those sound maxims of conduct; those lively touches of nature; those admirably serious lessons, though given on ridiculous occasions; those penetrating strokes of feeling; those solemnly sententious phrases, tinctured with the characteristic absurdity of the speaker, without any injury to the truth of the sentiment; that mixture of the wise and the ludicrous, of action always pitiably extravagant, and of judgment often exemplarily sober. In all these excellences Don Quixote is without a parallel.

How admirable (to produce only one instance out of a thousand) is that touch of human nature, where the knight of La Mancha having bestowed the most excessive and high-flown compliments on a gentleman whom he encountered when the delirium of chivalry raged most strongly in his imagination!—The gentleman, who is represented as a person of admirable sense, is led by the effect which these compliments produced on his own mind, to acknowledge the weakness of the heart of man, in the foolish pleasure it derives from flattery. 'So bewitching is praise,' says he, 'that even I have the weakness to be pleased with it, though at the same time, I know the flatterer to be a madman.'

Wit, it has been said, is gay, but humour is grave. It is a striking illustration of this opinion, that the most serious and solemn nation in the world has produced the work of the most genuine humour. Nor is it easy to express how admirably the pomp and stateliness of the Spanish language are suited to the genius of this work. It is not unfavourable to the true heroic, but much more especially it is adapted to the mock dignity of the sorrowful knight. It is accommodated to the elevation of the fantastic hero's tiptoe march, when he is sober, and still more to his stilts, when he is raving.

The two very ingenious French and English novelists, who followed Cervantes, though with unequal steps even as to talent, are still farther below their great master both in mental and moral delicacy. Though the scenes, descriptions, and expressions of Le Sage, are far less culpable, in point of decency, than those of his English competitor; yet both concur in the same inexpiable fault, each labouring to excite an interest for a vicious character, each making the hero of his tale an unprincipled profligate.

If novels are read at all in early youth, a practice which we should think, 'more honoured in the breach than the observance,' we should be tempted to give the preference to those works of pure and genuine fancy, which exercise and fill the imagination, in preference to those which, by exhibiting passion and intrigue in bewitching colours, lay hold too intensely on the feelings. We should even venture to pronounce those stories to be most safe, which, by least assimilating with our own habits and manners, are less likely to infect and soften the heart, by those amatory pictures, descriptions, and situations, which too much abound, even in some of the chastest compositions of this nature. The young female is pleasantly interested for the fate of Oriental queens, for Zobeide, or the heroine of Alamoran and Hamet; but she does not put herself in their *place;* she is not *absorbed* in their pains or their pleasures; she does not identify her feelings with *theirs*, as she too probably does in the case of Sophia Western and the princess of Cleves.—Books of the former description innocently invigorate the fancy, those of the latter convey a contagious sickliness to the mind. The one raises harmless wonder or inoffensive merriment: the other awaken ideas, at best unprofitable. From the flights of the one, we are willing to descend to the rationality of common life; from the seduction of the other, we are disgusted at returning to its insipidity.

There is always some useful instruction in those great original works of invention, whether poetry or romance, which transmit a faithful living picture of the *manners* of age and country in which the scene is laid. It is this which, independently of its other merits, diffuses that inexpressible charm over the Odyssey: a species of enchantment which is not afforded by any other poem in the world. This, in a less degree, is also one of the striking merits of Don Quixote. And this after having soared so high, if we may descend so low, is the principal recommendation of the Arabian Tales. These Tales also, though faulty in some respects, possess another merit which we should be glad to see transferred to some of the novels of a country nearer home. We learn from these Arabian stories, and indeed from most of the works of imagination of the Mahometan authors, what was the specific religion of the people about whom they write: how much they made religion enter into the ordinary concerns of life; and how observant persons professing religion were of its peculiarities and its worship.

It is but justice to observe, how far more deep-

ly mischievous the French novel writers are, than those of our own country; they not only seduce the heart through the senses, and corrupt it through the medium of the imagination, but fatally strike at the very root and being of all virtue, by annihilating all belief in that religion, which is its only vital source and seminal principle.

Shakspeare.

But lessons of a nobler kind may be extracted from some works which promise nothing better than mere entertainment; and which will not, to ordinary readers, appear susceptible of any higher purpose. In the hands of a judicious preceptor, many of Shakspeare's tragedies, especially of his historical pieces, and still more such as are rendered peculiarly interesting by local circumstances, by British manners, and by the introduction of royal characters who once filled the English throne, will furnish themes on which to ground much appropriate and instructive conversation.

Those mixed characters especially, which he has drawn with such a happy intuition into the human mind, in which some of the worst actions are committed by persons not destitute of good dispositions and amiable qualities, but overwhelmed by the storm of unresisted passion, sinking under strong temptation, or yielding to powerful flattery, are far more instructive in the perusal than the 'faultless monsters,' or the heroes of unmixed perfection of less skilful dramatists.—The agitations, for instance of the *timorous Thane*, a man not destitute of generous sentiments; but of a high and aspiring mind, stimulated by vain credulity, tempting opportunity, and an ambitious wife.—Goaded by the woman he loved to the crime he hated,—grasping at the crown, but abhorring the sin which was to procure it;—the agonies of guilt combating with the sense of honour—agonies not merely excited by the vulgar dread of detection and of punishment which would have engrossed an ordinary mind, but sharpened by unappeasable remorse: which remorse, however, proves no hindrance to the commission of fresh crimes, —crimes which succeed each other as numerously, and as rapidly, as the visionary progeny of Banquo.—At first,

What he would highly, he would holily:

But a familiarity with horrors soon cured this delicacy; and in his subsequent and multiplied murders, necessity became apology. The whole presents an awful lesson on the terrible consequences of listening to the first slight suggestion of sin, and strikingly exemplifies that from harbouring criminal thoughts, to the forming black designs, and perpetrating the most atrocious deeds, the mind is led by a natural progress, and an unresisted rapidity.

The conflicting passions of the capricious Lear! tender and affectionate in the extreme, but whose irregular affections were neither controuled by nature, reason, or justice; a character weak and vehement, fond and cruel; whose kindness was determined by no principle, whose mind was governed by no fixed sense of right, but vibrating with the accident of the moment, and the caprice of the predominant humour; sacrificing the virtuous child, whose sincerity should have secured his affection, to the preposterous flattery of her unnatural sisters—These highly wrought scenes do not merely excite in the reader a barren sympathy for the pangs of self-reproach, of destitute age, and suffering royalty, but inculcate a salutary abhorrence of adulation and falsehood; a useful caution against partial and unjust judgment; a sound admonition against paternal injustice and filial ingratitude.

The beautiful and touching reflection of Henry IV. in those last soul-searching moments, when the possession of a crown became nothing, and the unjust ambition by which he had obtained it every thing—Yet, exhibiting a prince still so far retaining to the last the cautious policy of his character, as to mix his concern for the state, and his affection for his son, with the natural dissimulation of his own temper; and blending the finest sentiment on the uncertainty of human applause and earthly prosperity, with a watchful attention to confine the knowledge of the unfair means by which he had obtained the crown to the heir who was to possess it;—the wily politician predominating to the last moment, and manifesting rather regret than repentance:—disclosing that the assumed sanctity with which he had been preparing for a crusade, was only a project to check those inquiries into his title to the crown to which peace and rest might lead; and exhorting the prince, with a foreseeing subtlety which little became a dying monarch, to keep up quarrels with foreign powers, in order to wear out the memory of domestic usurpation;—all this presents a striking exhibition of a superior mind, so long habituated to the devious paths of worldly wisdom, and crooked policy, as to be unable to desert them, even in the pangs of dissolution.

The pathetic soliloquies of the repentant Wolsey fallen from the pinnacle of wealth and power, to a salutary degradation! A disgrace which restored him to reason, and raised him to religion; which destroyed his fortune but rescued his soul:—his counsels to the rising statesman Cromwell, on the perils of ambition, and the precariousness of royal favour; the vanity of all attachment which has not religion for its basis; the weakness of all fidelity which has not the fear of God for its principle; and the perilous end of that favour of the courtier, which is enjoyed at the dear price of his 'integrity to Heaven!'—

The pernicious power of flattery on a female mind, so skilfully exemplified in that memorable scene in which the bloody Richard conquers the aversion of the princess Anne to the murderer of her husband, and of all his royal race! The deplorable error of the feeble-minded princess, in so far forgetting his crimes in his compliments, as to consent to the monstrous union with the murderer! Can there be a more striking exemplification of a position we have ventured so frequently to establish, of the dangers to which vanity is liable, and of the miseries to which flattery leads?

The reflections of Henry VI. and of Richard

II. on the cares and duties, the unsatisfactoriness and disappointment attending great situations, the vanity of human grandeur while enjoyed, and the uncertain tenure by which it is held! These fine soliloquies preach powerfully to the hearts of all in high stations, but most powerfully to those in the highest.

The terribly instructive death-bed of cardinal Beaufort, whose silence, like the veil in the celebrated picture of the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Timanthes, thrown over the father's face, penetrates the soul more by what it conceals, than could have been effected by any thing that its removal might have discovered.

These, and a thousand other instances, too various to be enumerated, too obvious to require specifying, and too beautiful to stand in need of comment, may, when properly selected, and judiciously animadverted on, not only delight the imagination, and gratify the feelings, but carry instruction to the heart.

The royal pupil may discern in Shakspeare an originality which has no parallel. He exhibits humour the most genuine, and, what is far more extraordinary, propriety of sentiment, and delicacies of conduct, where, from his low opportunities, failure had been pardonable. A fidelity to character so minute, that it seems rather the accuracy of individual history, marking the incidental deviations, and delineating the casual humours of actual life, than the invention of the poet. Shakspeare has seized every turn and flexure of the ever-varying mind of man in all its fluctuating forms; touched it in all its changeful shades; and marked it in all its nicer gradations, as well as its more abrupt varieties. He exhibits the whole internal structure of man; uniting the correctness of anatomy with the exactness of delineation, the graces of proportion, and often the highest beauty of colouring.

But with these excellences, the works of this most unequal of all poets contain so much that is vulgar, so much that is absurd, and so much that is impure; so much indecent levity, false wit, and gross description, that he should only be read in parcels, and with the nicest selection. His more exceptionable pieces should not be read at all; and even of the best much may be omitted. But the qualified perusal here suggested, may on account of his wonderful acquaintance with the human heart, be attended with peculiar advantages to readers of the class in question, one of whose chief studies should be that of mankind, and who from the circumstance of station and sex, have few direct and safe means of acquiring a knowledge of the world, and an acquaintance with the various characters which compose it.

To the three celebrated Greek tragedians we have already adverted, as uniting with the loftiest powers of genius, a general prevalence of virtuous, and often even of pious sentiments. The scenes with which they abound, of meritorious, of suffering, of imprudent, of criminal, of rash, and of penitent princes; of royalty under every vicissitude of passion, of character, and circumstance, will furnish an interesting and not unprofitable entertainment. And Mr. Potter has put the English reader in possession of these ancient bards, of Eschylus especially, in a manner highly honourable to his own taste and learning.

Most of the tragedies of Racine are admirably written, and are unexceptionable in almost all respects. They possess, though conveyed in the poor vehicle of French versification,* all the dramatic requisites, and to their author we can safely ascribe one merit, superior even to that of the critical exactness with which he has regulated the unities of his plays by Aristotle's clock; we mean his constant care not to offend against modesty or religion. His Athalie exhibits at once, a chief d'œuvre of the dramatic art, a proof of what exquisite poetic beauties the Bible histories are susceptible; a salutary warning to princes on the miseries attendant upon treachery, impiety, and ambition; and a lively instance of not only the private value but the great political importance of eminently able and pious ministers of religion.

If the Italian language should form a part of the royal education, we might name Metastatio as quite inoffensive in a moral view, though necessarily mixing something of the flimsy texture of the opera with the severer graces of Melpomene.—His muse possesses an equable and steady pinion: if she seldom soars into sublimity, she never sinks to meanness; she is rather elegant and pleasing, than vigorous or lofty. His sacred dramas are particularly excellent, and are scarcely less interesting to the reader of taste than of piety. They also exempt from a certain monotony, which makes his other pieces too much to resemble each other.

It is with no small regret that, persuaded as we are that England is the rich native soil of dramatic genius, we are driven to the painful necessity of recommending exotics in preference to the indigenous productions of our own fruitful clime. The truth is, that though we possess in our language admirable single pieces, yet our tragic poets have afforded scarce any instances, except Milton in his exquisite Comus and Samson Agonistes, and Mason in his chaste and classic dramas, in which we can conscientiously recommend their *entire unweeded* volumes, as never deviating from that correctness and purity which should be the inseparable attendant on the tragic muse.†

We shall, indeed, find not only that virtuous scenes, and even pious sentiments, are scattered throughout most of our popular tragedies, but that the general moral also is frequently striking and impressive. Its *end*, however is often defeated by the *means* employed to accomplish it. In how many, for instance, of the favourite tragedies of Rowe and Otway, which are most frequently acted, do we find passages, and even

* It is a curious circumstance in the history of French dramatic poetry, that the measure used by their best poets in their sublimest tragedies is the anapæstic, which, in our language, is not only the lightest and most undignified of all the poetic measures, but is still more degraded by being chiefly applied to burlesque subjects. It is amusing to an English ear, to hear the Brutus of Racine, the Cid of Corneille, and the Orosmane and Orestes of Voltaire, declaim, philosophize, sigh, and rave in the precise measure of

A cobler there was, and he liv'd in a stall

† Thompson's tragedies furnish the best exception to this remark of any with which the author is acquainted.

whole scenes of a directly contrary tendency; passages calculated to awaken those very passions which it was the professed object of the author to counteract?

> First raising a combustion of desire,
> With some cold moral they would quench the fire.

When we contrast the purity, and I had almost said, the piety of the works of the tragic poets of pagan Greece, and even the more select ones of popish France, with some of the pieces of the most shining bards of protestant Britain, do they not all appear to have been in an inverse ratio with the advantages which their authors enjoyed?

It may be objected, that in speaking of poetic composition, we have dwelt so long, and almost so exclusively on the drama. It would, indeed, have been far more pleasant to range at large through the whole flowery fields of the muses, where we could have gathered much that is sweet, and much that is salutary. But we must not indulge in excursions which are merely pleasurable. We have on all occasions made it a point not to recommend books because they are pleasant or even good, but because they are appropriate. And as it is notorious

> ———that gorgeous tragedy
> With *sceptred* palls comes sweeping by
> Presenting Thebes' or Pelops' line:

that she prefers the splendid scenes of royal courts to the retired courts of private life; that she delights to exemplify virtue, to designate vice, or dignify calamity, by choosing her personages among kings and princes, we therefore thought it might not be altogether unuseful, in touching on this topic, to distinguish between such authors as are safe, and such as are dangerous; by mentioning those of the one class with deserved commendation, and by generally passing over the names of the others in silence.

CHAP. XXXI.

Books of instruction, &c. Lord Bacon, &c.

In the 'prophet of unborn science,' who brought into use a logic almost entirely new, and who rejected the study of words for that of things, the royal pupil may see the way, rarely used before his time, of arguing by induction; a logic grounded upon observation, fact, and experiment. To estimate the true value of Lord Bacon, we should recollect what was the state of learning when he appeared; we should remember with what a mighty hand he overthrew the despotism of that absurd system which had kept true knowledge in shackles, arrested the progress of sound philosophy, and blighted the growth of the human intellect.

His first aim was to clear the ground, by rooting out the preconceived errors, and obstinate prejudices, which long prescription had established; and then to substitute what was useful, in place of that idle and fruitless speculation which had so long prevailed.—He was almost the first rational investigator of the laws of nature, who made genuine truth and sound knowledge, and not a barren curiosity and an unprofitable ingenuity the object of his pursuit. His instances are all said to be collected with as much judgment, as they are recorded with simplicity. He teaches the important art of viewing a question on all sides, and of eliciting truth from the result; and he always makes reasoning and experiment go hand in hand, mutually illustrating each other.

One principal use of being somewhat acquainted with this great author is, to learn that admirable method and order which he uniformly observes. So excellent is the disposition he makes, that the reader is not lost, even in that mighty mass of matter in which he arranges the arts of history, poetry, and philosophy, under their three great corresponding faculties, of memory, imagination, and understanding. This perspicuous clearness of distribution; this breaking up his subject into parts, without losing sight of that whole to which each portion preserves its exact subordination, enables the reader to follow him without perplexity, in the wide stretch and compass of his intellectual researches.

With the same admirable method he has also made a distribution of the several branches of history. He separates it into three divisions —chronicles, or annals, lives, and relations; assigning in his luminous way, to each its respective properties. Lives of individuals, he is of opinion, exhibit more faithful and lively narratives of things; and he pronounces them capable of being more safely and advantageously transferred into example, than general history. He assigns a great degree of usefulness to special relation of actions, such as Cataline's conspiracy, and the expedition of Cyrus; conceiving them to be more pleasant by presenting a subject more manageable, because more limited. And as a more exact knowledge and full information may be obtained of these individual relations, the author, he observes, is not driven like the writer of general history, to fill up chasms and blank spaces, out of his own imagination.*

* There is one instance in which even this great author has poorly executed his own ideas. After so ably laying down the outline of history, he has shown little skill, in an individual instance, in filling it up. Few writers have more remarkably failed, than Lord Bacon in his history of Henry VII. It is defective in almost all the ingredients of historic composition; neither possessing majesty nor dignity on the one hand, nor ease and perspicuity on the other. There is a constant aim at wit and pleasantry, with a constant failure in both. The choice of matter is injudicious; great circumstances are often slightly touched, while he enlarges upon trifles. The history is feeble narrative; the style is affected declamation; loaded, as if in defiance of Quintilian's precept, with those double epithets, which, as that noblest of critics observes, when each does not furnish a fresh idea, is as if every common soldier in an army should carry a footman, increasing the incumbrance without adding to the strength. The history of Henry VII. wants perspicuity, simplicity, and almost every grace required of the historic muse. And what is more strange, we neither discover in this work the deep politician, the man of business, the man of genius, or the man of the world. It abounds with those colloquial familiarities, we had almost said vulgarisms, with which the works of that reign are generally infected, but which we do not expect in this great author. Bud-

Politics he arranges with the same methodical order, dividing them into three several parts, —the preservation of a state, its prosperity, and its enlargement. Of the two former branches, he allows that preceding authors had already treated, but intimates that he himself was the first who had discussed the latter. As political economy will hereafter form an important branch of study for the royal pupil, we are, happily, not wanting in very able modern authors, who, living in our time, are likely to be more extensively useful, from their intimate acquaintance with existing circumstances, and with the revolutions which have led to them.

Nothing seems to have been too great, or too small, for the universal mind of Bacon; nothing too high for his strong and soaring wing; nothing too vast for his extensive grasp; nothing too deep for his profound spirit of investigation; nothing too minute for his microscopic discernment. Whoever dives into the depths of learning, or examines the intricacies of politics, or explores the arcana of nature, or looks into the mysteries of art, or the doctrines of religion, or the scheme of morals, or the laws of jurisprudence, or the decorums of court, or the duties of public conduct, or the habits of domestic life; whoever wanders among the thorns of metaphysics, or gathers the flowers of rhetoric, or plucks the fruits of philosophy, will find that this noble author has been his precursor; and that he himself can scarcely deviate into any path which Bacon has not previously explored.

Nor did the hand which so ably treats on the formation of states, disdain to arrange the plants of the field, or the flowers of the parterre; nor was the statesman, who discoursed so largely and so eloquently on the methods of improving kingdoms, or the philosopher, who descanted on the means of augmenting science, above teaching the pleasing art to select the sheltered spot for the tender exotic, to give minute instructions for polishing 'the dry smooth-shaven green,' for raising a strawberry, or cultivating a rose.

His moral essays are fraught with familiar wisdom, and practical virtue. With this intellectual and moral treasure the royal pupil cannot be too intimately conversant. His other writings are too voluminous, as well as too various and too scientific, to be read at large; and it is become the less necessary, the works of Bacon having been the grand seed-plot, out of which all the modern gardens of philosophy, science, and letters, have been either sown or planted.

It is with deep regret we add, that after admiring in the works of this wonderful man to what a pitch the human mind can soar, we may see, from a few unhappy instances in his conduct, to what debasement it can stoop. While his writings store the mind with wisdom, and the heart with virtue, we may, from his practice, take a melancholy lesson on the imperfection of human excellence, by the mortifying consideration of his ingratitude as a friend, his adulation as a courtier, and his venality as a chancellor.

Of the profound and various works of Locke, the most accurate thinker, and justest reasoner, which this or perhaps any other country has produced, we would particularly recommend the short but very valuable treatise on the *Conduct of the Understanding*. It contains a familiar and popular illustration of some important discoveries in his most distinguished work, the Essay on the Human Understanding, particularly that great and universal law of nature, 'the support of so many mental powers (that of memory under all its modifications) and which produces equally remarkable effects in the intellectual, as that of gravitation does in the material world, *the association of ideas*.'—A work of which even the sceptical rhapsodist, lord Shaftsbury, who himself possessed much rhetoric and little logic, pronounced, that 'it may qualify men as well for business and the world, as for the sciences and the university.'

There are few books with which a royal person ought to be more thoroughly acquainted, than with the famous work of Grotius on the *Rights of War and Peace*. In this work the great principles of justice are applied to the highest political purposes; and the soundest reason is employed in the cause of the purest humanity. This valuable treatise owed its birth to the circumstance of the author, a statesman and ambassador, having, as he himself observes, personally witnessed in all parts of the Christian world, 'such an unbridled licentiousness with regard to war, as the most barbarous nations might blush at.' 'They fly to arms,' says he 'on frivolous pretences; and when once they have them in their hands, they trample on all laws, human and divine, as if from the time of their assumption of arms they were authorized so to do.'

In the course of the work he inquires, with a very vigorous penetration, into the origin of the rights of war, its different kinds, and the extent of the power of the sovereign. He clearly explains the nature and extent of those rights, the violation of which authorizes the taking up arms. And finally, after having ably descanted on all that relates to war in its beginning, and its progress, he as ably enlarges on the nature of those negociations and treaties of peace which terminate it.*

With an intrepidity worthy of his genius, he was not afraid of dedicating a book containing such bold and honest doctrines to a king of France. This admirable treatise was found in the tent of the great Gustavus after his death. It had been one of the principal objects of his

gell has published in the Guardian, a collection of numberless passages from this history, exemplifying almost every kind of literary defect; not with an invidious design to injure so great a name, but lest the authority of that name should sanction bad writing. The present criticism is offered, lest it should sanction bad taste.

* The censure frequently expressed in these volumes, against princes who inconsiderately engage in war, can never apply to that in which we are involved. A war, which, on the part of the enemy, has levelled the just fences which separated nations, and destroyed the good faith which united them. A war, which on our part was entered upon, not for conquest but existence; not from ambition but necessity; not for revenge but justice; not to plunder other nations but to preserve our own. And not exclusively, even to save ourselves, but for the restoration of desolated nations, and the final safety and repose of the whole civilized world.

study. The Swedish monarch knew how to choose his books and his ministers. He studied Grotius, and he employed Oxenstiern.

If the royal person would peruse a work, which to the rhetoric of ancient Greece, and the patriot spirit of ancient Rome, unites the warmth of cotemporary interest and the dearness of domestic feeling; in which to the vigour of a rapid and indignant eloquence, is superadded the widest extent of general knowledge, and the deepest political sagacity:—a work

> Where old experience doth attain,
> To something like prophetic strain:

a work which first unlocked the hidden springs of revolutionary principles; dived into the complicated and almost unfathomable depths of political, literary, and moral mischief; penetrated the dens and labyrinths, where Anarchy who long had been mysteriously brooding, at length hatched her baleful progeny;—laid bare to view the dark recesses, where sacrilege, murder, treason, regicide, and atheism were engendered.—If she would hear the warning voice which first sounded the alarm in the ears of Britain, and which, by rousing to a sense of danger, kindled the spirit to repel it, which, in Englishmen, is always but one and the same act, she should peruse *Mr. Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution.*

It was the peculiar felicity of this great, but often misguided man, to light at last upon a subject, not only singularly congenial to the turn of his genius, but of his temper also. The accomplished scholar, the wit of vivid imagination, the powerful orator rich in imagery, and abounding in classic allusion, had been previously displayed to equal advantage in his other works, but with considerable abatements, from prejudices which sometimes blinded his judgment, from a vehemence which often clouded his brightness. He had never wanted genius: it would be hard to say he had ever wanted integrity;—but he had often wanted that consistency which is so necessary to make the parts of a great character cohere to each other. A patriot, yet not unfrequently seeming to act against the interests of his country; a senator, never heard without admiration, but sometimes without effect; a statesman, often embarrassing his adversaries, without always serving his friends, or advancing his cause. But in this concentration of his powers, this union of his faculties and feelings, *the Reflection on the French Revolution*, his impetuosity found objects which rendered its exercise not only pardonable but laudable. That violence, which had sometimes exhausted itself, unworthily in party, or unkindly on individuals, now found full scope for its exercise, in the unrestrained atrocities of a nation, hostile not only to Britain but to human nature itself. A nation not offending from the ordinary impulse of the passions, which might have been repelled by the ordinary means of resistance, but 'committing the oldest crimes the newest kind of way,' and uniting the bloody inventions of the most selfish ambition, and the headlong appetites of the most unbridled vices, with all the exquisite contrivances of gratuitous wickedness. And happily for his fame, all the successive actors in the revolutionary drama took care to sin up to any intemperance of language which even Mr. Burke could supply.

CHAP. XXXII.

The Holy Scriptures.—The Old Testament.

In speaking of the nature and evidences of revealed religion, it was impossible to avoid anticipating the subject of this chapter, as it is from the Holy Scriptures alone that the nature of our divine religion can be adequately ascertained; and as it is only in that sacred volume that we can discover those striking congruities between Christianity, and all the moral exigencies of man, which form so irresistible an evidence of its coming from that God, 'who is above all, and through all, and in us all.'

There are, however, some additional points of view in which the Holy Scripture ought to be considered. It is doubtless most deeply interesting, as it contains in it that revelation from heaven which was 'to give light to them that sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. But while we joyfully follow this collected radiance, we may humbly endeavour to examine the apparatus itself by which those beams of heaven are thrown on our path. Let us then consider the divine volume somewhat more in detail, endeavouring at the same time not to overlook those features which it presents to the critic, or philologist. We do not mean to him who, while he reads, affects to forget, that he has in his hands the *book of God*, and therefore indulges his perverse or profligate fancy, as if he were perusing the poems of Homer or Hafez. But we mean the Christian critic, and the Christian philologist; characters, it is true, not very common, yet through the mercy of God so exemplified in a few nobler instances, even in our own days, as to convince us, that in the formation of these volumes of eternal life, no faculty, no taste, no impressible point in the mind of man, has been left unprovided for. They show us, too, what an extensive field the sacred Scriptures furnish for those classical labours, of which they possibly were deemed scarcely susceptible before the admirable Lowth gave his invaluable Prelections.

The first circumstance which presents itself, is the variety of composition which is crowded into these narrow limits. Historical records extending through thousands of years;—poetry of almost every species;—biographic memoirs of that very kind which the modern world agrees to deem most interesting; epistolary correspondence which even for excellence of manner might challenge a comparison with any composition of that nature in the world; and lastly, that singular kind of writing, peculiar to this sacred book, in which the veil that hides futurity from man is penetrated, remote occurrences so anticipated, as to imply a demonstration that God alone could have communicated such knowledge to man.

In the historic parts, we cannot but be struck with a certain peculiar consciousness of accurate

knowledge, evincing itself by its two grand characteristics, precision and simplicity. They are not the annals of a nation which are before us, so much as the records of a family. Truth is obviously held in supreme value, since, even where it is discreditable, there is not the slightest attempt to disguise it. The affections are cordially at work; but they are more filial than patriotic, and more devout than filial. To these writers the God of their fathers is of more importance than their fathers themselves. They therefore preserve, with the greatest care, those transactions of their ancestors, which were connected with the most signal interferences of heaven; and no circumstance is omitted, by which additional motives might be afforded for that habitual reverence, supreme love and unshaken confidence, towards the Eternal Father, which constituted the pure and sublime religion of this singly enlightened people. What Moses magnificently expresses in the exordium of that noble ode, the 90th psalm, contains the central principle which all their history was intended to impress. 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place from one generation to another; before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst made the earth and the world; even from everlasting to everlasting, THOU ART GOD.'

Other nations have doubtless made their history subservient to their mythology; or rather, being ignorant of the facts; they have at once gratified their national vanity, and indulged their moral depravity in imagining offensive and monstrous chimeras. But do these humiliating infatuations of human kind, universal as they have been, bear any shadow of analogy to the divinely philosophic grandeur of Hebrew piety? All other mythologic histories degrade our nature. This alone restores its primeval dignity. The pious Jews were doubtless the greatest zealots on earth. But for whom? 'For no grisly terror,' 'nor execrable shape,' like all other Orientalists, ancient and modern; no brute like the Egyptians, nor deified monster worse than brute, like the Greeks and Romans. But it was for HIM, whom philosophers in all ages have in vain laboured to discover; of whose character, nevertheless, they have occasionally caught some faint idea from those very Jews, whom they have despised, and who, in the description even of the heathen Tacitus, awes our minds, and claims the natural homage of our hearts.—'The Egyptians,' says that unbribed evidence, in the midst even of an odious representation of the Jewish nation, 'venerate various animals, as well as likenesses of monsters. The Jews acknowledge, and that with the *mind* only, a single Deity. They account those to be profane, who form images of God of perishable materials, in the likeness of men. There is *the one supreme eternal God, unchangeable, immortal.* They therefore suffer no statues in their cities, and still less in their temples. They have never shown this mark of flattery to their kings. They have never done this honour to the Cæsars.'*

What then was zeal for such worship as this, but the purest reason, and the highest magnanimity? And how wise as well as heroic do they appear who made no account of life in such a cause? 'O king,' say they, 'we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us out of thine hand! But if not, be it known unto thee, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'

Of such a religion as this, what can be more interesting than the simple, the affectionate history? it is not men whom it celebrates; it is 'Him who only hath immortality, who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.' And how does it represent him? That single expression of the patriarch Abraham will fully inform us: 'Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right.' A sentiment, short and simple as it is, which carries more light to the mind, and more consolation to the heart, than all the volumes of all the philosophers.

But what was the *moral* efficacy of this religion? Let the youthful Joseph tell us. Let him, at the moment of his victory over all that has most effectually subdued human nature, discover to us where his strength lay. 'How,' says he, 'shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God.'

Of the lesser excellences of these historic records, little on the present occasion can, and, happily, little needs be said. If the matter is unmixed truth, the manner is unmixed nature. Were the researches of Sir William Jones, and those who have followed him in the same track, valuable on no other account, they would be inestimable in this respect, that through what they have discovered and translated, we are enabled to compare other eastern compositions with the sacred books of the Hebrews; the result of which comparison, supposing only taste and judgment to decide, must ever be this, that in many instances, nothing can recede farther from the simplicity of truth and nature than the one, nor more constantly exhibit both than the other. This assertion may be applied with peculiar justness to the poetic parts of the Old Testament. The character of the eastern poetry, in general, would seem to be that of floridness and exuberance, with little of the true sublime, and a constant endeavour to outdo rather than to imitate nature. The Jewish poetry seems to have been cast in the most perfect mould. The expressions are strictly subordinate to the sense; and while nothing is more energetic, nothing is more simple and natural. If the language be strong, it is the strength of sentiment allied with the strength of genius, which alone produces it. For this striking dissimilarity the difference of subject will account. There is one God.—*This* is perfect simplicity. He is omniscient, omnipotent, infinite, and eternal.—*This* is sublimity beyond which nothing can rise. What evinces this to be the real source of excellence in Hebrew poetry is, that no instance of the sublime, in the whole compass of human composition, will bear a comparison with what the Hebrew poets say of the Almighty. For example: what in all the poetry, even of Homer, is to be compared with this passage of David—'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from

* Tacitus Hist. Lib. v. 5.

thy presence? if I climb up into heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.'

It is a peculiarity of Hebrew poetry, that it alone, of all the poetry we know of in the world, retains its poetic structure in the most literal translation; nay, indeed, the more literal the translation, the less the poetry is injured. The reason is, that the sacred poetry of the Hebrews does not appear to depend on cadence or rhythm, or any thing merely verbal, which literal translation into another language necessarily destroys; but on a method of giving to each distinct idea a two-fold expression, so that when the poetry of the Old Testament is perfect, and not injured by erroneous translation, it exhibits a series of couplets, in which the second member of each couplet repeats the same, or very nearly the same sense, in a varied manner—As in the beginning of the 95th psalm:

O come let us sing unto the Lord,
Let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation;
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
And show ourselves glad in him with psalms:
For the Lord is a great God,
And a great king above all gods:
In his hands are the deep places of the earth,
And the strength of the hills is his also.

The motive for adopting such a structure we easily conceive to have been, that the composition might be adapted to responsive singing. But, can we avoid acknowledging a much deeper purpose of infinite wisdom, that that poetry which was to be translated into all languages, should be of such a kind as literal translation could not decompose?

On the subject of Hebrew poetry, however, it is only necessary to refer the reader to bishop Lowth's work already mentioned, and to that shorter, but most luminous discourse on this subject, prefixed to the same excellent author's translation of Isaiah.

Moral philosophy in its truest and noblest sense, is to be found in every part of the Scriptures. Revealed religion being, in fact, that 'day spring from on high,' of whose happy effects the Pagan philosophers had no knowledge, and the want of which they were always endeavouring to supply by artificial but most delusive contrivances. But the portion of the sacred volume which is most distinctly appropriated to this subject are the books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. In the former of these, amid some difficult passages, obscured to us by our ignorance of ancient nations and manners, there are some of the deepest reflections on the vanity of all things earthly, and on the indispensable necessity of sincere religion, in order to our ease and happiness, that ever came from the pen of man. It asserts the immortality of the soul, of which some have supposed the Jews ignorant, in terms the most unequivocal. 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, *and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.*' And it ends with a corollary to which every human heart ought to respond, because all just reflections lead to it.—'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is *the whole of man.*—For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'

The Proverbs are an invaluable summary of every species of practical wisdom. The first nine chapters being a discourse on true wisdom, that is, sincere religion, as a principle, and the remainder a sort of magazine of all its varied parts, civil, social, domestic, and personal, in this world; together with clear and beautiful intimations of happiness in a life to come. As for example:—'The path of the just is as a shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Here, one of the most delightful objects in nature, the advancing dawn of the morning, is educed as an emblem of that growing comfort and cheerfulness which inseparably attend a life of piety. What then, by inevitable analogy, is that perfect day in which it is made to terminate, but the eternal happiness of heaven? Both these books, with the greater part of the Psalms, have this suitable peculiarity to the present occasion, that they issued from a royal pen. They contain a wisdom, truly, which belongs to all; but they also have much in them which peculiarly concerns those, who, by providential destination, are shepherds of the people. The 101st psalm, in particular, may be considered as a kind of abridged manual for princes, especially in the choice of their company.

CHAP. XXIII.

The Holy Scriptures.—The New Testament.

The biographic part of the New Testament is above all human estimation, because it contains the portraiture of 'him in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'—If it were, therefore, our hard lot to say what individual part of the Scriptures we should wish to rescue from an otherwise irreparable destruction, ought it not to be that part which describes to us the conduct and preserves to us the instructions of *God manifest in the flesh?* Worldly Christians have affected sometimes to prefer the Gospel to the rest of the New Testament, on the intimated ground that our Saviour was a less severe preceptor, and more of a mere moralist than his inspired followers, whose writings make up the sequel of the New Testament. But never surely was there a grosser delusion. If the object be to probe the heart of man to the centre; to place before him the terrors of that God, who to the wicked 'is a consuming fire;' to convince him of that radical change which must take place in his whole nature, of that total conquest which he must gain over the world and himself, before he can be a true subject of the Messiah's spiritual kingdom; and of the desperate disappointment which must finally await all who rest in the mere profession, or even the plausible outside of Christianity; it is from our Lord's discourses that we shall find the most resistless means of accomplishing each of these awfully important purposes.

To the willing disciple our Saviour is in-

deed the gentlest of instructors; to the contrite penitent he is the most cheering of comforters; to weakness he is most encouraging; to infirmity, unspeakably indulgent; to grief or distress of whatever sort, he is a pattern of tenderness. But in all he says or does, he has one invariable object in view, to which all the rest is but subservient. He lived and taught, he died and rose again, for this one end, that he might 'redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of *good works*.' His uniform declarations therefore, are—'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.—Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'—'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.' 'Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me, he cannot be my disciple.'

To corrupt human nature these lessons can never be made engaging. Their object is to conquer, and finally to eradicate that corruption. To indulge it, therefore, in any instance, is wholly to reject them; since it is not with particular vices that Christ contends, nor will he be satisfied with particular virtues. But he calls us, indispensably to a *state of mind*, which contains, as in a root or principle, all possible virtue, and which avoids, with equally sincere detestation, every species of evil. But to human nature itself, as distinct from its depravity, to native taste, sound discriminating sense, just and delicate feeling, comprehensive judgment, profound humility, and genuine magnanimity of mind, no teacher upon this earth ever so adapted himself. In his inexhaustible imagery, his appropriate use of all the common occurrences of life, his embodying the deepest wisdom in the plainest allegories, and making familiar occurrences the vehicle of most momentous instruction, in the dignified ease, with which he utters the profoundest truths, the majestic severity which he manifests where hollow hypocrisy, narrow bigotry, unfeeling selfishness, or any clearly deliberate vice called forth his holy indignation; in these characters we recognise the purest, and yet most popular, the most awful, and yet the most amiable of all instructors. And when we read the Gospels with rightly prepared hearts, we see him with our mind's eye, as he actually was in this world, scarce less effectually than those who lived and conversed with him. We too, 'behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.'

The acts of the Apostles belong in some degree to the biographic class. Where the matter of a work is of the deepest moment the more agreeableness of its manner is of less importance. But where a striking provision has been made for pleasure, as well as benefit, it would be ingratitude as well as insensibility not to notice it. It is indeed impossible for a reader of taste, not to be delighted with the combination of excellences, which this short but most eventful narrative exhibits. Nothing but clearness and accuracy appear to be aimed at, yet every thing which can give interest to such a work is attained. Neither Xenophon nor Cæsar could stand a comparison with it. St. Luke in this piece has seen every thing, so clearly, has understood it so fully, and has expressed it so expositely, as to need only a simple rendering of his own exact words in order to his having, in every language, the air of an original.

The epistolary part of the New Testament is, perhaps, that with which the generality of readers are least acquainted. Some profess to be discouraged by the intricacy of the sense, particularly in the writings of St. Paul; and others fairly acknowledge that they conceive this part of the Scripture to be of less moment, as being chiefly occupied in obsolete controversies peculiar to the time in which they were written, consequently uninteresting to us. Though our limits do not admit of a particular reply to those unfounded prejudices, yet we cannot forbear regretting, what appears to be a lamentable ignorance of the nature and design of Christianity, which distinguishes our times, and which has given rise to both these suppositions. They, for example, who regard religion but as a more sublimated system of morality, and look for nothing in the Scripture but rules of moral conduct, must necessarily feel themselves at a stand, when something infinitely deeper seems to present itself before them. But if it were first fully known, what the Christianity of the Apostles actually was, their sentiments would soon become intelligible. They treat of Christianity as an inward principle still more than as a rule of conduct. They by no means neglect the latter; but the former is their leading object. In strict observance of that maxim, so variously given by their divine master—'Make the tree good and its fruit will be good.'—They accordingly describe a process, which, in order to real goodness, must take place in the depths of the heart. They detect a root of evil which disqualifies man for all real virtue, and deprives him of all real happiness. And they describe an influence proceeding from God himself, through a divine Mediator, ready to be communicated to all who seek it, by which this evil nature is overcome, and a holy and heavenly nature formed in its room. They describe this change as taking place by means of the truths and facts revealed in the Gospel, impressing themselves by the power of God's holy Spirit upon the mind and heart; in consequence of which new desires, new tastes, new powers, and new pursuits succeed. Things temporal sink down into complete subordination, to things eternal; and supreme love to God and unfeigned charity to man, become the master passions of the soul. These are the subjects which are chiefly dwelt on in the Epistles, and they will always in a measure be unintelligible to those who do not 'receive the truth in the love of it.' Even in many human pursuits, actual practice is indispensable to a clear understanding of the principles.

If this be a fair state of the case, ought we not to study these portions of Scripture with an attention suitable to their acknowledged depth, instead of attempting to force a meaning upon them, at the expense of common sense, in order to make them seem to correspond with our superficial religion? Should we not rather endeavour to bring our religion to a conformity with their plain and literal import? Such attempts,

sincerely made, would soon give clearness to the understanding; and a more than philosophic consistency, as well as a more than human energy, would be found there, where all before had seemed perplexed and obscure.—We do not, however, deny, that the Epistles contain more reference than the Gospels to Jewish customs, and to a variety of local and temporary circumstances not well understood by us. Yet, though written to individual men, and to particular churches; not only general inferences, applicable to us may be drawn from particular instructions, but by means of them, the most important doctrines are often pointedly exhibited.

Where this truly Christian discernment is exercised, it will be evident how much it softens and enlarges the heart! how it extends and illuminates the mental view! how it quickens and invigorates the feeling! how it fits the mind for at once attending to the minutest, and comprehending the vastest things! In short, how pure, how wise, how disinterested, how heavenly,—we had almost said how morally omnipotent it makes its complete votary!

On this head we will add but one remark more. Even through the medium of a translation, we observe a remarkable difference of manner in the apostolic writers.—There is indeed a very close resemblance between the views and topics of St. Paul and St. Peter, though with much difference of style. But St. James and St. John differ from both these, and from each other, as much as any writers could, who agree cordially in one general end. The Christian philosopher will be able to account for this difference by its obvious correspondence with what he sees daily in natural tempers. In St. John he will discover the cast and turn of a sublimely contemplative mind, penetrating the inmost springs of moral action, and viewing the heart as alone secured and perfected by an habitual filial reverence to, and, as he expresses it, 'communion with the Father of spirits.' In St. James he will see the remarks of a plain and more practical mind, vigilantly guarding against the deceits and dangers of the world, and somewhat jealous lest speculation should, in any instance, be made a pretext for negligence in practice. And lastly, he will perhaps recognise in St. Paul, that powerful character of mind, which, being under the influence of no particular temper, but possessing each in its full strength, and all in due temperament, gives no colouring to any object but what it actually possesses, pursues each valuable end in strict proportion to its worth, and varies its self-directed course, in compliance with no attraction, but that of truth, of fitness, and of utility. In such a variety, then, he will find a new evidence to the truth of Christianity, which is thus alike attested by witnesses the most diversified; and he will, with humble gratitude, adore that condescending wisdom and goodness, which has thus, within the sacred volume itself, recognised, and even provided for, those distinctions of the human mind, for which weak mortals are so unwilling to make allowance in each other.

The prophetic part is mentioned last, because it peculiarly extends itself through the whole of the divine volume. It commences with the first encouraging promise which was given to man after the primeval transgression, and it occupies the last portion of the New Testament. It might naturally have been expected, that in a revelation from the sovereign of all events, the future designs of Providence should be so far intimated, as clearly to evince a more than human foresight, and by consequence a divine origin. It might also have been thought probable, that those prophecies should embrace so extended a series of future occurrences, as to provide for successive confirmations of the revelation, by successive fulfilments of the predictions. And lastly, it might be thought reasonable, that while such intimations should be sufficiently clear to be explained by the actual event, they should not be so explicit as to gratify curiosity respecting future contingencies; such an anticipation of events being clearly unsuitable to that kind of moral government under which the author of our nature has placed us.

It is conceived that such precisely are the characters of those predictions which are so numerous in the Scripture. They point to a continued succession of great occurrences; but, in general, with such scattered rays of light, as to furnish few materials for premature speculation. Even to the prophet himself the prospect is probably enveloped in a deep mist, which while he looks intently, seems for a short space to open, and to present before him certain grand objects, whose fleeting appearances he imperfectly catches, but whose connexion with, or remoteness from, each other he has not sufficient light to distinguish.

These remarks, however, apply most strictly to prophecies of remote events.—When nearer occurrences are foretold, whether relating to the Jewish nation, or to the countries in its neighbourhood, there is often a surprising clearness, as if in these cases, the intention was to direct conduct for the present, as well as confirm faith by the result. And in a few important instances, even distant futurity is so distinctly contemplated, as to make such predictions a permanent, and to every candid reader, an irrefragable evidence, that a volume so undeniably ancient, and yet so unequivocally predictive, can be no other than divine.

Of this last class of prophecies, as most directly interesting, it may not be useless to point out the following striking examples.—The denunciation by Moses of what should be the final fate of the Jews, in case of obstinate disobedience.*—Isaiah's astonishing picture of the sufferings, death, and subsequent triumph of the Redeemer †; a prediction upon which every kind of sophistry has been tried in vain. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, with Daniel's interpretation ‡; a prophecy which contains in it an absolute demonstration of revealed religion. Daniel's own vision of the four empires, and of that divine one which should succeed them.§ His amazing prophecy of the seventy weeks,‖ which, however involved in obscurity as to niceties of chronology, is in clearness of prediction a standing miracle; its fulfilment in the death of the Messiah, and the destruction of Jerusalem, being as self-

* Deut. xxviii. † Isaiah. liii. ‡ Daniel, ii.
§ Daniel, vii. ‖ Daniel, ix.

evident as that Cæsar meant to record his own actions in his Commentaries. To these I would add, lastly, that wonderful representation of the papal tyranny in the Apocalypse,* which, however, involving some obscure circumstances, is nevertheless so luminous an instance as to preclude the possibility of evasion. The extreme justness of the statement respecting papal Rome must force itself on every mind at all acquainted with the usual language of the Old Testament prophets, and with the authentic facts of ecclesiastical history.

Among circumstantial prophecies of near events may be reckoned Jeremiah's prediction of the taking of Babylon,† by the king of the Medes, on which the history of the event, as given by Xenophon in the Cyropedia, is the best possible comment. The prophecy of the fall of Tyre in Ezekiel,‡ in which there is the most remarkable detail of the matter of ancient commerce that is perhaps to be any where found. But of all such prophecies, that of our Saviour, respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, as given in repeated parables and express denunciations, is most deeply worthy the attention of the Christian reader.

A question has been started among scholars respecting the double sense of prophecy; but it seems astonishing to any plain reader of the Bible how it could ever become a matter of doubt. —What can be more likely, for instance, than that some present event in which David was interested, perhaps his inauguration, suggested to him the subject of the second psalm? Yet what can be more evident than that he describes a dominion infinitely beyond what can be attributed to any earthly potentate? The fact seems to be, that the Jewish dispensation being, in its most leading parts, a prefiguration of the christian dispensation and the most celebrated persons, as well as events, being typical of what was to come, the prophetic spirit could not easily contemplate the type without being carried forward to its completion. And, therefore, in almost every case of the kind the more remote object draws the attention of the prophet as if insensibly, from the nearer,—the greatness of the one naturally eclipsing the comparative littleness of the other. This occurs in such a number of instances as to form one of the most prominent characters of prophecy.

We shall conclude the subject with observing on that over-ruling Providence which took care that the Scriptures of the Old Testament should be translated into the Greek language, before the original dialect became obscure, by which means, not only a most important preparation was made for the fuller manifestation which was to follow; but the sense of the Scriptures, in all important instances, was so unequivocally fixed, as to furnish both a guide for the learned Christian in after-times, and a means of confronting Jewish misrepresentations with the indisputable acknowledgments of earlier Jews, better used to the language, and uninfluenced by any prejudice. And, may we add, that the choice of the Greek for the original language of the New Testament, is not less worthy of attention? By that wise and gracious arrangement every lineament and every point of our divine religion has acquired an imperishable character; since the learned have agreed, that no language is so capable of expressing every minute distinction and shade of thought and feeling, or is so incapable of ever becoming equivocal: the works which have been composed in it, ensuring its being studied to the end of the world.

* Chap. xvii. † Jeremiah l. and li.
‡ Ezekiel xxvi. and xxvii.

CHAP. XXXIV.

On the abuse of terms.—Enthusiasm.—Superstition.—Zeal for religious opinions no proof of religion.

To guard the mind from prejudice is no unimportant part of a royal education. Names govern the world. They carry away opinion, decide one character, and determine practice. Names, therefore, are of more importance than we are aware. We are apt to bring the quality down to the standard which the name establishes, and our practice rarely rises higher than the current term which we use when we speak of it.

The abuse of terms has at all times been an evil. To enumerate only a few instances. We do not presume to decide on the measure which gave birth to the clamour, when we assert, that in the progress of that clamour, greater violence has seldom been offered to language than in the forced union of the two terms, *Liberty and Property.** A conjunction of *words*, by men who were, at the same time labouring to disjoin the *things*. If liberty, in their sense, had been established, property would have had an end, or rather would have been transferred to those, who, in securing what they termed *their* liberty, would have made over to themselves that property, in the pretended defence of which the outcry was made. At a more recent period, the term *equality* has been substituted for that of property. The word was altered, but the principle retained. And, as the preceding clamour for liberty was only a plausible cover for making *property* change hands, so it has of late been tacked to equality, with a view to make *power* change hands. Thus, terms the most popular and imposing, have been uniformly used as the watch-words of tumult, plunder, and sedition.

But the abuse of terms, and especially their unnecessary adoption, is not always limited to the vulgar and the mischievous. It were to be wished that those persons of a better cast, who are strenuous in counteracting the evils themselves, would never naturalize any terms which convey revolutionary ideas. In England, at least, let us have no *civic* honours, no *organization* of plans.

There are perhaps few words which the reigning practice has more warped from its legitimate meaning and ancient usage than the term *proud*. Let us try whether Johnson's definition sanctions the adopted use.—'Proud,' says that accurate philologist, 'means, *elated—haughty—daring—presumptuous—ostentatious*,' &c. &c.

* By Wilkes, and his faction.

Yet do we not continually hear, not merely the journalist and the pamphleteer, but the legislator and the orator, sages who give law, not to the land only, but to the language, using the term exclusively, in an honourable sense.—'They are proud to acknowledge,' 'proud to confess.' Instead of the heart-felt language of gratitude for a deliverance or a victory, we hear of 'a proud day,' 'a proud circumstance,'—'a proud event,' thus raising to the dignity of virtue, a term to which lexicographers and moralists have annexed an odious, and divines an unchristian sense. If pride be thus enrolled in the list of virtues, must not humility by a natural consequence be turned over to the catalogue of vices? If pride was made for man, has not the Bible asserted a falsehood?

In the age which succeeded to the reformation, 'holiness' and 'practical piety' were the terms employed by divines when they would inculcate that conduct which is suitable to Christians. The very words conveyed a solemnity to the mind, calculated to assist in raising it to the prescribed standard. But those very terms being unhappily used, during the usurpation, as masks to cover the worst purposes, became, under Charles, epithets of ridicule and reproach; and were supposed to imply hypocrisy and false pretence. And when, in a subsequent period, decency resumed her reign, and virtue was countenanced, and religion respected: yet mere decorum was too often substituted for religious energy, nor was there such a general superiority to the dread of censure, as was sufficient to restore the use of terms, which hypocrisy had abused, and licentiousness derided.*

Indifference in some assumed the name of moderation, and zeal in others grew cool, or was ashamed to appear warm. The standard of language was either let down to accommodate itself to the standard of practice, or piety itself was taken some notes lower, to adapt it to the established phraseology. Thus, morality, for instance, which heretofore, had only been used (and very properly) as one name amongst many, to express right conduct, now began to be erected into the exclusive term. The term itself is most unexceptionable. Would that all who adopt it, acted up to the rectitude which it implies! but, partly from its having been antecedently used to express the pagan virtues; partly from its having been set up by modern philosophers, as opposed to the peculiar graces of Christianity, and consequently converted by them into an instrument for decrying religion; and partly because many who profess to write theories of morality, have founded them on a mere worldly principle, we commonly see it employed, not in its own distinct and limited meaning, but, on the contrary, as a substitute for that comprehensive principle of elevated, yet rational piety, which forms at once the vital spring and essential characteristic of Christian conduct.

It is necessary also to apprise those whose minds we are forming, that when they wish to inquire into the characters of men, it is of importance to ascertain the principles of him who gives the character, in order to obtain a fair knowledge of him of whom the character is given. To exemplify this remark by the term enthusiasm. While the wise and temperate Christian deprecates enthusiasm as highly pernicious, even when he hopes it may be honest—justly ascribing it to a perturbed and unsound, or at least, an over eager and weak mind—the irreligious man, who hates piety, when he fancies he only hates fanaticism, applies the term enthusiast to every religious person, however sober his piety, or however correct his conduct.

But even he who is far from remarkable for pious ardors, may incur the stigma of enthusiasm, when he happens to come under the censure of one who piques himself on still greater latitude of sentiment. Thus, he who professes to believe in 'the only begotten Son of God as in glory equal with the Father,' will be deemed an enthusiast by him who embraces the chilling doctrines of Socinus. And we have heard, as if it were no uncommon thing, of a French philosopher of the highest class, accounting his friend *un peu fanatique*, merely because the latter had some *suspicion* that there was a God. In fact we may apply to enthusiasm, what has been said on another occasion:

> Ask where's the North—At York 'tis on the Tweed,
> In Scotland at the Orcades; and there,
> At Greenland, Zembla———

But it may be asked, has religious enthusiasm, after all, no definite meaning? or are religion and frenzy *really* so nearly allied, that no clearly distinctive line can be drawn between them? One of our most eminent writers has told us, that 'enthusiasm is a kind of excess in devotion, and that superstition is the excess, not only of devotion, but of religion in general.' A strange definition! For what is devotion; and what is religion, if we cannot be in earnest in them without hazarding our rationality, which, however, must be the case, if this definition were accurate? For if the excess of devotion were enthusiasm, and the excuse of religion were superstition, it would follow, that to advance in either would be to approximate to fanaticism. Of course, he who wished to retain his mental sanity, must listen with caution to the apostolic precept, of *growing* in grace.

But, with all due respect to Mr. Addison, may we not justly question whether there can be such a thing as an excess of either devotion or religion, in the proper sense of the terms? We never seriously suppose that any one can be too wise, too pure, or too benevolent. If at any time we use a language of this apparent import, we always conceive the idea of some spurious intermixture, or injudicious mode of exercise. But

* It is however to be observed, that at no period, perhaps, in English history, was there a more strict attention to public morals, or a more open avowal of religion, than during the short reign of queen Mary. Nothing was with that excellent princess, so momentous an object, as that religion might attain its just credit, and diffuse its effectual influences through society. Upon this her deepest thoughts were fixed; to this her most assiduous endeavours were directed. And it was not wholly in vain. A spirit of pious activity spread itself both through clergy and laity. Religious men took fresh courage to avow themselves, and merciful men laboured in the cause of humanity with increased zeal and success. It seems to have been under this brief, but auspicious government, that the dissolute habits of the two former reigns received their first effectual check.

when we confine our thoughts to the principle itself, we do not apprehend that we *can* become too predominant,—to be too virtuous, being just as inconceivable as to be too happy.

Now if this be true of any single virtue, must it not hold equally good respecting the parent principle of all virtue?—What is religion, or devotion (for when we speak of either, as a principle, it is, in fact, a synonyme of the other) but the 'so loving what God has commanded, and desiring what he has promised, as that, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found?' Now can there be excess in this? We may doubtless *misunderstand* God's commands, and *misconstrue* his promises, and, in either way, instead of attaining that holy and happy fixedness of heart, become the victims of restless perturbation. But if there be no error in our apprehension, can there be any excess in our love? What does God *command*? Every thing that tends to our personal, social, political, as well as eternal well-being. Can we then feel too deep love for the sum of all moral excellence? But what does God *promise*? Guidance, protection, all necessary aids and influences here; and hereafter, 'fulness of joy and pleasures at his right hand for evermore.' Can such blessings as these be too cordially desired? Amid

> The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
> Which flesh is heir to,

can our hopes of future happiness be too cheering, or our power of rising above the calamities of mortality be too habitual, or too effectual? Such are the questions obviously suggested by the supposition of such a thing as excess in religion. And doubtless the answer of every serious and reflecting mind must be, that in 'pure and undefiled religion,' in 'loving the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves,' the idea of *excess* is as incongruous and inadmissible, as that of a happy life being too long, or of the joys of heaven being less desirable because they are eternal.

But if, instead of cultivating and advancing in this love of God and man,—instead of loving what God has really commanded, and desiring what he has clearly promised in his holy word,—this word be neglected, and the suggestions of an ardent, or of a gloomy fancy be substituted in its room, then the person becomes in the strictest and truest sense, a fanatic; and as his natural temperament may happen to be sanguine or saturnine, he rises into imaginary raptures or sinks down into torturing apprehensions, and slavish self-inflictions.

Here then, if I am not mistaken, we may discover the real nature of both enthusiasm and superstition. It is not *excess* of devotion which constitutes the one, nor *excess* of religion in general which leads to the other. But both are the consequence of a *radical misconception* of religion. Each alike implies a compound of ignorance and passion; and as the person is disposed to hope or fear, he becomes enthusiastical on the one hand, or superstitious on the other. He in whom *fear* predominates, most naturally mistakes *what God commands*, and instead of taking that *law* for his rule, 'whose seat is the bosom of God, and whose voice the harmony of the world,'* in a most unhappy manner, becomes a law unto himself, multiplying observances, which have nothing to recommend them, but their irksomeness or uncouthness; and acting, as if the way to propitiate his Maker were by tormenting himself. He, on the contrary, in whom the *hopeful* passions are prevalent, no less naturally misconceives what *God has promised* and pleases himself with the prospect, or persuades himself into the imaginary possession, of extraordinary influences and supernatural communications. Both, it is evident, mean to pursue religion, but neither has sufficient judgment to ascertain its real nature. Perhaps, in general, some mental morbidness is at the bottom, which, when of the depressive kind, disposes to the superstitious view of religion, and when, of the elevating kind, to the enthusiastical.

Religion, the religion of the Scriptures, is itself an exquisite temperament, in which all the virtues, of which man is capable, are harmoniously blended. He, therefore, who studies the Scriptures, and draws thence his ideas and sentiments of religion, takes the best method to escape both enthusiasm and superstition. Even infidelity is no security against either. But it is absolutely impossible for an intelligent votary of scriptural Christianity to be in any respect fanatical. True fanatics, therefore, are apt to neglect the Scriptures, except so far as they can turn them to their own particular purpose. The Romish church, for example, became negligent of the Scriptures, nearly in proportion as it became superstitious. And every striking instance of enthusiasm, if inquired into, will be found to exemplify the same dereliction. In a word, Christianity is eternal truth, and they who soar *above* truth, as well as they who sink *below* it, equally overlook the standard by which rational action is to be regulated: whereas to adhere steadily to this, is to avoid all extremes, and escape, not only the tendency toward pernicious excess, but any danger of falling into it.

Did we accustom ourselves to exact definitions, we should not only call the disorderly religionist an enthusiast; we should also feel, that if irrational confidence, unfounded expectations, and assumptions without a basis, be enthusiasm, then is the term most justly applicable to the mere worldly moralist. For does not he wildly assume effects to be produced without their proper means, who looks for virtue without piety, for happiness without holiness; for reformation without repentance; for repentance without divine assistance; for divine assistance without prayer; and for acceptance with God without regard to that Mediator, whom God has ordained to be our great high priest?

But, while accuracy of definition is thus recommended, let it not be forgotten, that there is need on all sides of exercising a candid judgment. Let not the conscientious Christian sus-

* Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, conclusion of the first book.

pect, that the advocate for morality intends by the term to depreciate religion, unless it appear that he makes morality the root as well as the produce of goodness.—Nor let the moralist, whose affections are less lively, and whose views are less elevated, deem the religious man a fanatic, because he sometimes adopts the language of Scripture to express feelings to which human terms are not always adequate. We mean not to justify, but to condemn, as a gross defect of good sense, as well as of taste and elegance, that ill-conditioned phraseology, which, by disfiguring the comeliness of piety, lessens its dignity, and injures its interests. Doubtless, a good understanding cannot be more usefully exercised, nor can the effects of mental cultivation be better shown, than in bringing every aid of a sound judgment, and every grace of a correct style into the service of that divine religion, which does not more contain all that is just and pure, than it coalesces with all that is 'lovely, and of good report.'

The too frequent abuse of such terms as *moderation*, *candour*, *toleration*, &c. should be pointed out to those whose high station prevents their communication with the world at large. It should be explained, that moderation, in the new dictionary, means the abandonment of some of the most essential doctrines of Christianity.—That candour in the same school of philology, denotes a latitudinarian indifference, as to the comparative merits of all religious systems.—That toleration signifies such a low idea of the value of revealed truth, and perhaps such a doubt even of its existence, as makes a man careless, whether it be maintained or trampled on, vindicated or calumniated.—A toleration of *every* creed generally ends in an indifference to *all*, if it does not originally spring from a disbelief of all. Even the noble term *rational*, which so peculiarly belongs to true religion, is frequently used to strip Christianity of her highest attributes and her sublimest energies, as if in order to be rational, divine influences must be excluded. Or, as if it were either suitable to our necessities, or worthy of God, that when he was giving 'his word to be a light to our paths,' he should make that light a kind of moral moonshine, instead of accompanying it with such a vital warmth, as might invigorate our hearts, as well as direct our footsteps.

Though it would be absurd for a prince to become a wrangling polemic like Henry VIII. or 'a royal doctor,' like the first James; yet he should possess so much information, as to be enabled to form a reasonable judgment between contending parties, and to know the existing state of religion. And, that he may learn to detect the artifices of men of loose principles, he should be apprised, that the profane and the pious do not engage on equal terms. That the carelessness of the irreligious gives him an apparent air of good humour, and his levity the semblance of wit and gayety; while his Christian adversary ventures not to risk his soul for a bon-mot, nor dares to be witty on topics which concern his eternal interests.

It will be important, on the other hand, to show that it is very possible to be zealous for religious opinions, without possessing any religion; nay, that a fiery religious zeal has been even found compitable with the most flagitious morals. The church of Rome so late as the sixteenth century, presented numberless examples of men, whose lives were a tissue of vices, which cannot so much as be named, who yet, at the risk of life, would fight in defence of a ceremony, for the preservation of a consecrated vase, or a gift devoted to a monastery.

To show that it is possible to be zealous for religious opinions, without being religious, we need not look back to the persecuting powers of Pagan or Papal Rome; nor need we select our instances from the disciples of Dominic; nor from such monsters as Catharine di Medici; nor from such sanguinary bigots as the narrow-souled Mary, nor the dark-minded Philip. Examples from persons less abhorrent from human feelings, more mixed characters, the dark shades of whose minds are blended with lighter strokes, and whose vices are mitigated with softer qualities, may be more properly considered, as approaching nearer to the common standard of human life.

That a prince may be very zealous for religious opinions and observances, and yet be so defective in moral virtue, as to be both personally and politically profligate, is exemplified in our second James, who renounced three kingdoms for his religion, yet neither scrupled to live in the habitual violence of the seventh commandment, nor to employ the inhuman Jefferies as his chancellor.

Harlai, archbishop of Paris, distinguished himself by his zeal in attacking heresy: so all religion was called except that of the Jesuits. His activity proceeded from no love of piety, but from a desire to make his way at court, where zeal, just then, happened to be the fashion. His religious activity, however, neither prevented, nor cured, the notorious licentiousness of his moral conduct.* The king, his master, fancied, that to punish Jansenism, was an indubitable proof of religion; but to persecute protestantism, he conceived to be the consummation of piety. What a lesson for princes, to see him, after the revocation of the edict of Nantz, gratefully swallowing the equally false and nauseous compliments of his clergy, for having, to borrow their own phrase, *without violent hands made the whole kingdom of one opinion, and united all his subjects to the faith of Rome!* Iniquitous flattery, when FOUR MILLIONS of those subjects were either groaning under torture, or flying into exile; turning infidels, if they resolved to retain their property; or chained to the gallies, if they preferred their conscience to their fortune!

As the afflicted Hugonots were not permitted to carry their complaints to the foot of the throne, the deluded king fancied his bloody agents to be mild ministers, and the tortured protestants to be mischievous heretics. But,

* It was a fact well known at the court of Versailles, that madame de Montespan, during the long period in which she continued the favourite mistress of the king, by whom she had seven children,) was so strict in her religious observances, that, lest she should violate the austerity of fasting, her bread, during Lent, was constantly *weighed*.

though the kingdom was, in many parts, nearly depopulated by exile and executions, the sword, as usual, made not one proselyte. The subjects were tortured, but they were not converted. The rack is a bad rhetorician. The gallies may harrass the body, but do not convince the understanding, nor enforce articles of faith.*

Under all these crimes and calamities, Louis, as a French memorialist observes, was not ashamed to hear, what Boileau was not ashamed to sing,

L'Univers sous ton regne a-t-il des Malheureux?

Colbert, who was a wise man, might have taught his royal master, that in this persecution there was as little policy as piety, and that he was not only injuring his conscience, but his country. By banishing so many useful subjects, he impoverished the state doubly, not only by robbing it of the ingenuity, the manufactures, and the labours of such multitudes, but by transferring to hostile countries all the industry and talents which he was driving from his own. If the treachery of detaining the protestants under false promises, which were immediately violated, is to be charged on Louvois, the crime of blindly confiding in such a minister is to be charged on the king.

How little had this monarch profited, by the example given, under similar circumstances, by Louis XII. When some of the pious Waldenses, while they were improving his barren land in Provence by their virtuous industry, had been grievously persecuted, through false representations; that prudent prince commanded the strictest inquiry to be made into their real character; the result was, that he was so perfectly convinced of their innocence, that he not only protected them during the rest of his reign, but had the magnanimity to declare, that 'they were better men than himself and his catholic subjects.'

Happy had it been for himself and for the world, if the emperor Charles V. had instituted the same inquiries! Happy, if in the meridian of his power he had studied the character of mankind to as good purpose, as he afterwards, in his monastic retreat, studied the mechanism of watches! Astonished to find, that after the closest application, he never could bring any two to go just alike, he expressed deep regret at his own folly, in having bestowed so much time and pains in the fruitless attempt of bringing mankind to an exact uniformity in their religious opinions. But, the discovery was made too late; he ended where he should have begun.

HAP. XXXV.

The Reformation.

In order to increase the royal pupil's reverence for Christianity, before she is herself able to appreciate its value, she should be taught, that it did not steal into the world in the days of darkness and ignorance, when the spirit of inquiry was asleep; but appeared in the most enlightened period of the Roman empire. That its light dawned, not on the remoter regions of the earth, but on a province of that empire, whose peculiar manners had already attracted much notice, and whose local situation placed it particularly within the view of surrounding nations. Whereas the religion of Mahomet and the corruptions of popery, which started up almost together, arose when the spirit of investigation, learning, and philosophy, had ceased to exert itself. That, during those dark ages, both Christianity and human learning were nearly extinguished; and that, as both had sunk together, so both together awoke from their long slumber. The restoration of letters was the restoration of religion also; the free access to the ancient authors being one grand instrument of the revival of pure Christianity.

The learning which existed in the church antecedently to the Reformation, was limited to very few, and was in the general, but meagre and superficial; and the purposes to which it was confined, formed an effectual obstacle to substantial improvement. Instead of being employed in investigating the evidences of Christianity, or in elucidating the analogy of Christian principles, with the laws of the natural, and the exigencies of the moral world, it was pressed into the service of what was called school divinity; a system, which perhaps had providentially been not without its uses at a previous period, especially when under the discretion of a sound and upright mind, as having served both to elicit and exercise the intellect of a ruder age. Study and industry, however they may be misapplied, are always good in themselves; and almost any state is better than hopeless inanity. These schoolmen perhaps sustained the cause of Religion, when she might utterly have sunk, though with arms little suited to make their support effectual, or to produce solid practical benefit, either to the church or the people. Some of the earlier scholastic divines, though tedious, and somewhat trifling, were, however, close reasoners, as well as pious men, though they afterwards sunk in rationality, as they increased in quibbling and subtlety. Yet, defective as their efforts were, they had been useful, as they had contributed to oppose infidelity, and to keep alive some love of piety and devotion, in that season of drowsy inactivity. But, at the period to which we refer, their theology had become little better than a mazy labyrinth of trivial, and not seldom of pernicious sophistry. Subtle disquisitions, metaphysical niceties, unintelligible obscurities, and whimsical distinctions, were substituted in the place of revealed truth; for revealed truth was not sufficiently intricate for the speculations of those puzzling theologians, of whom Erasmus said, that, 'they had brought it to be a matter of so much wit to be a Christian, that ordinary heads were not able to reach it.'—And, as genuine Christianity was not sufficiently ingenious for these whimsical doctors, neither was it sufficiently pliant and accommodating to suit the corrupt state of public morals.

* Louvois and his master would have done wisely to have adopted the opinion of those two great ministers of Henry IV. who, when pressed to persecute, replied that they thought 'it better to have a peace which had two religions, than a war which had none.'

Almost entirely overlooking the Scriptures, the school-men had built schemes and systems on the authority of the fathers, some of them spurious ones. The philosophy of Aristotle had also been resorted to for some of the chief materials of the system; so that as the author of the History of the Council of Trent informs us, 'if it had not been for Aristotle, the church had wanted for many articles of faith.'

The early reformers defeated these sophisters, by opposing to their unsubstantial system, the plain unadulterated Bible. The very text of holy Scripture, and the most sober, rational, and simple deductions from thence, furnished the ground work of their arguments. And to this noble purpose they applied that sound learning, which Providence had caused to revive just at the necessary period. Their skill in the Greek and Hebrew languages enabled them to read the original Scriptures, and to give correct translations of them to the public. And, in this respect, they had an important advantage over the school divines, who did not understand the language in which their master Aristotle had written. It is no wonder, if an heterogeneous theology should have been compounded out of such discordant materials as were made up from spurious fathers, and an ill-understood pagan philosopher. The works of this great author, which, by an inconsistency not uncommon in the history of man, had not long before been prohibited by a papal decree, and burnt by public authority, came, in the sixteenth century, to be considered as little less than canonical!

But this attachment to sophistry and jargon was far from being the worst feature of the period in question. The generality of the clergy were sunk into the grossest ignorance, of which instances are recorded scarcely credible in our day of general knowledge. It is difficult to say whether the ecclesiastics had more entirely discarded useful learning, or Scripture truth. In the place, therefore, of the genuine religion of the Bible, they substituted false miracles, lying legends, purchased pardons, and preposterous penances. A procedure which became the more popular, as it introduced a religion which did not insist on the inconvenient appendage of a good life; those who had money enough, easily procured indemnity for a bad one; and to the profligate and the affluent, the *purchase* of good works was certainly more agreeable than the *practice*.

We are far from asserting, that there were no mixtures of infirmity in the instruments which accomplished the great work of the reformation. They were fallible men. But it is now evident to every sincere inquirer, that many of their transactions, which have been represented by their adversaries as corrupt and criminal, only appeared such to those who did not take their motives, and the critical circumstances of the times, into the account, or who had an interest in misrepresenting them. Many of those actions, which, through false colourings were made to appear unfavourable, are now clearly proved to have been virtuous and honourable; especially when we take the then situation of things, and the flagitious conduct of the priests and pontiffs with whom they had to deal into the account.

Mr. Hume has been among the foremost to revive and inflame the malignant reports respecting them. He allows indeed the *inflexible intrepidity with which they braved dangers, tortures, and even death itself.* But still they were, in his estimation, the 'fanatical and enraged reformers.' And he carefully suggests, through the course of history, that *fanaticism is the characteristic of the protestant religion.* The terms 'protestant fanaticism,' and 'fanatical churches,' he repeatedly uses. He has even the temerity to assert, in contradiction to all credible testimony, that the reformers placed all merit in a mysterious species of faith, in inward vision, rapture, and ecstacy.' A charge, to say nothing of truth and candour, unworthy of Mr. Hume's good sense, and extensive means of information. For there is no fact better known, than that these eminently wise men never pretended to illuminations and impulses. What they undertook honestly, they conducted soberly. They pretended to no inspiration; they did not even pretend to introduce a *new*, but only to restore to its primitive purity 'the *old* religion.' They respected government, practised and taught submission to civil rulers, and desired only the liberty of that conscience which God has made free.*

But though in accomplishing the great work of the reformation, reason and human wisdom, were most successfully exercised; though the divine interference was not manifested by the working of miracles, or the gift of supernatural endowments: yet who can doubt, that this great work was directed by the hand of heaven, especially when we consider the wonderful predisposition of causes, the extraordinary combination of circumstances, the long chain of gradual but constantly progressive occurrences, by which this grand event was brought about? The successive as well as contemporary production of singular characters, calculated to promote its *general* accomplishment, and each peculiarly fitted for his own *respective* work! So many unconscious or unwilling instruments made subservient to one great purpose!—Friends and enemies, even Mussulmen and popes, contributing, certainly without intending it, to its advancement!—Mahomet banishing learning from the east, that it might providentially find a shelter in these countries, where the new opinions were to be propagated!—Several successive sovereign pontiffs, collecting books and patronizing that literature which was so soon to be directed against their own domination!—But above all, the multiplication of contemporary popes, weakening the reverence of the people, by occasioning a schism in the church, and exhibiting its several heads wandering about, under the ludicrous circumstance of each claiming infallibility for himself, and denying it to his competitor!—Infallibility, thus split, was discredited, and in a manner annihilated.—To these preparatory circumstances we may add the infatuation, or ra-

* See an excellent appendix to Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. page 136, on the *spirit* of the reformers, and the injustice of Mr. Hume, by that truly elegant, candid, and accomplished scholar, and most amiable man, the late Rev Dr. Archibald Maclaine,

The lover and the love of human kind.

ther judicial blindness, of the papal power: the errors, even in worldly prudence, committed by Leo, a pontiff otherwise of admirable talents!—The half measures adopted, at one time, of inefficient violence; at another, of ineffectual lenity!

The temporary want of sagacity in an ecclesiastical court, which was usually remarkable for political acuteness!—The increasing aptitude of men's minds to receive truth, in proportion as events occurred to mature it!—Some who loved learning, and were indifferent to religion, favouring the reformation as a cause connected with good letters; the old doctrines becoming united with the idea of ignorance, as the new ones were with that of knowledge!—The preparatory invention of printing, without which the revival of learning would have been of little general use, and the dispersion of the Scriptures slow, and inconsiderable!—Some able and keen-sighted men, working vigorously from a perception of existing abuses, who yet wanted sufficient zeal for the promotion of religious truth!

The pointed wit, the sarcastic irony, and powerful reasoning of Erasmus, together with his profound theological learning, directed against the corruptions of the Church, with such force as to shake the credit of the clergy, and to be of the utmost service to that cause, which he wanted the righteous courage systematically to defend!* The unparalleled zeal, abilities, and integrity of Luther! His bold genius, and adventurous spirit, not contenting itself, as the other reformers had done, with attacking notorious errors, and stigmatising monstrous abuses; but sublimely exerted in establishing, or rather restoring the great fundamentals of Christianity! While Erasmus, with that truly classic taste of which he was the chief reviver, so elegantly satirized the false views of God and religion, which the Romish church entertained, Luther's aim was to acquire true Scriptural notions of both. Ridicule served to expose the old religion, but something nobler was necessary to establish the new.—It was for Erasmus to shake to its foundation the monstrous system of indulgences; it remained for Luther to restore, not to invent, the doctrine of salvation by remission of sins through a Mediator.—While his predecessors, and even coadjutors, had been satisfied by pulling down the enormous mass of corruptions, the mighty hand of the Saxon reformer not only removed the rubbish, but erected a fair fabric of sound doctrine in its place. The new edifice arose in its just symmetry, and derives impregnable strength, in consequence of its having been erected on a broad foundation. Nothing short of the ardour of Luther could have maintained this great cause in one stage, while perhaps the discreet temperance of Melancthon was necessary to its support in another! The useful violence of Henry in attacking the people, with a zeal as furious as if he himself had not been an enemy to the reformation, exhibiting a wonderful illustration of that declaration of the Almighty, that *the fierceness of man shall turn to his praise!*—The meek wisdom of Cranmer, by which he was enabled to moderate the otherwise uncontrolable temper of his royal master!—The undaunted spirit and matchless intrepidity of Elizabeth, which effectually struggled for, and finally established it! These, and a thousand other concurring circumstances, furnish the most unclouded evidence, to every mind not blinded by prejudice, that the divine AUTHOR of Christianity, was also, though by the agency of human means and instruments, the RESTORER of it.

* Every elegant scholar must naturally be an admirer of Erasmus. We should be sorry to incur the censure of any such by regretting, that the wit and indignation of this fine genius sometimes carried him to great lengths. Impiety, doubtless, was far from his heart, yet in some of his Colloquies, when he only professed to attack the errors of popery, religion itself is wounded by strokes which have such a tendency to profaneness, as to give pain to the sober reader.

CHAP. XXXVI.

On the importance of religious institutions and observances.—They are suited to the nature of Christianity, and particularly adapted to the character of man.

THAT torrent of vices and crimes which the French revolution has disembogued into society, may be so clearly and indisputably traced to the source of infidelity, that it has, in a degree become fashionable to profess a belief in the truths, and a conviction of the value of Christianity. But, at the same time, it has too naturally happened, that we have fallen into the habit of defending religion, almost exclusively, on political and secular grounds; as if Christianity consisted merely in our not being atheists or anarchists. A man, however, may be removed many stages from the impiety of French infidels, and yet be utterly destitute of real religion.

Many, not openly profane, but even entertaining a respect for the political uses of religion, have a way of generalizing their ideas, so as to dismiss the revelation from the account.—Others again, who in this last respect agree with the former class, affect a certain superiority over the low contracted notions of churchmen and collegians. These assert, that, if virtue be practised, and public order preserved, the motive on which the one is practised, and the other maintained, is not worth contending for. Many there are, who, without formally rejecting Christianity, talk of it at large, in general, or in the abstract.—As if it were at once to exempt themselves from the trouble of religion, and to escape the infamy of Atheism, these men affect to think so high of the Supreme Being, whose temple is universal space, that he needs not to be worshipped in temples made with hands. And forgetting that the world which he thought it worth while to create, he will certainly think it worth while to govern, they assert, that he is too great to attend to the concerns of such petty beings as we are, and too exalted to listen to our prayers.—That it is a narrow idea which we form of his attributes, to fancy that one *day* or one *place* is more acceptable to him than another.—That all religions are equally pleasing to God, provided the worshipper be sincere.—That the establishment of a public ministry is

perhaps a good expedient of political wisdom, for awing the vulgar; but that every man is his own priest.—That all errors of opinion are innocent; and that the Almighty is too just to punish any man for merely speculative tenets.

But, these lofty contemners of institutions, observances, days, ordinances, and priests, evince, by their very objections, that they are not more ignorant of the nature of God, as he has been pleased to reveal himself in Scripture, than of the character of man, to whose dispositions, wants, desires, distresses, infirmities, and sins, the spirit of Christianity, as unfolded in the Gospel, is so wonderfully accommodated. This admirable congruity would be of itself sufficient, were there no other proof to establish the divine authority of our religion.—Private prayer, public worship, the observation of the Sabbath, a standing ministry, sacramental ordinances, are all of them so admirably adapted to those sublimely mysterious cravings of the mind, which distinguish man from all inferior animals, by rendering him the subject of hopes and fears, which nothing earthly can realize or satisfy, that it is difficult to say, whether these sacred institutions most bespeak the wisdom or the goodness of that supreme benefactor, who alone could have thus applied a remedy, because he alone could have penetrated the most hidden recesses of that nature which required it. Religion, in fact, is not more essential to man, than, in the present state of things, those appointments are essential to religion. And, accordingly, we see, that when they are rejected, however its unprofitable generalities may be professed, religion itself, practically, and in detail, is renounced. Nor can it be kept alive in creatures so abounding in moral, and so exposed to natural evil, by mere metaphysical distinctions, or a bare intellectual conception of divinity. In beings whose minds are so liable to wander, religion to be sustained, requires to be substantiated and fixed, to be realized and invigorated. Conscious of our own infirmity, we ought to look for every outward aid to improve every internal grace; and consequently ought gladly to submit to the control of habits, and the regularity of institutions. Even in the common pursuits of life, our fugitive and unsteady thoughts require to be tied down by exercises, duties, and external circumstances. And while the same expedients are no less necessary to insure the outward observances of religion, instead of obstructing, they promote its spirituality; for they are not more fitted to attract the senses of the ignorant, than they are to engage the thoughts, and fix the attention, of the enlightened. While, therefore, in order to get rid of imaginary burdens, and suspected penalties, men are contending for a philosophical religion, and an imaginary perfection, of which the mind, while incorporated with matter, is little capable, they lose the benefit of those salutary means and instruments, so admirably adapted to the state of our minds, and the constitution of our nature. Means and instruments, which, on a sober inquiry into their origin, will be found as awfully sanctioned, as they are obviously suitable;—in a word, which will be found, and this, when proved, puts an end to the controversy, to be the appointments of God himself.

The Almighty has most certainly declared, that he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. But does it therefore follow, that he will not be worshipped in *churches*?—We know that *all* our days are his, and for the use of all we are accountable to him. But, does this invalidate the duty of making *Sunday* more peculiarly his?—We are commanded to 'pray without ceasing; in every thing to give thanks;' that is to carry about with us a heart disposed to pray, and a spirit inclined to thankfulness; but is this any argument against our enjoining on ourselves certain stated times of more regular prayer, and fixed periods of more express thanksgiving? Is it not obvious, that the neglect of the religious observance of Sunday, for example, results, in fact, from an irreligious state of the heart, however gravely philosophic reasons for the omissions may be assigned? Is it not obvious also, that the very recurrence of appointed seasons serves to stir up to the performance of the duties allotted to them? The philosopher may deride this as a mechanical religion, which requires to have its springs wound up, and stand in need of external impulses to set it a-going. But the Christian feels, that though he is neither to regulate his devotions by his crucifix, nor to calculate them by his beads, yet, while his intellectual part is encumbered with a body, liable to be misled by temptation without, and impeded by corruption within, he stands in need of every supplemental aid to remind, to restrain, and to support him. These, therefore, are not helps which superstition has devised, or fallible man invented. Infinite wisdom, doubtless, foreseeing that what was left dependent on the choice of mutual human will to be observed, would probably not be observed at all, did not leave such a duty to such a contingency, but established these institutions as part of his written word; the lawgiver himself also sanctioning the law by his own practice.

It would be well if these men of large views and philosophical conceptions, would consider if there be nothing in the very structure of the human mind, we had almost said, in the very constitution of nature, which might lead us to expect, that religion *would* have those grosser, and more substantial parts and relations, which we have represented; instead of being that entirely thin and spiritual essence, of which they vainly dream. It was reserved for a philosopher of our own nation to show, that the richest possessions of the most capacious mind are only the well arranged and variegated ideas which originally entered in through the medium of the senses, or which we derive from contemplating the operations of our own minds, when employed on those ideas of sensation. But, if material bodies are the sources whence general knowledge is derived, why is every thing to be incorporeal which respects religion? If innate ideas have no existence in the human mind, why are our religious notions not to be derived from external objects?

Plato, the purest of heathen philosophers, and the nearest to those who derived their light from heaven, failed most essentially in reducing his theory to practice. He seems to have supposed that we possess certain ready-framed notions of

every thing essential to moral happiness; and that contemplation of the *chief good*, and subjugation of animal nature, were all that was necessary to moral perfection. Is it not then most worthy of attention, that the holy Scripture differs from the plan of the Grecian sage, just where he himself differs from truth and nature, as developed by their most accurate observer, the sagacious and venerated Locke? Man, according to this profound reasoner, derives the original stock of his ideas from objects placed in his view, which strike upon his senses. Revelation as if on this very principle, presents to man impressive objects. From the creation to the deluge, and still more from the call of Abraham, when we may say that our religion commences, to the giving of the Holy Ghost, after our Saviour's ascension, the period in which we may deem its character completed, we are instructed in a great measure, by a series of FACTS.—In the earlier period, especially, we do not meet with theoretic descriptions of the divine nature; but we see the eternal God himself, as with our mind's eye, visibly manifesting himself to the patriarchs, exemplifying his attributes to their senses, and by interpositions the most impressive, both in a way of judgment and of mercy, training them to apprehend him; in the mode of all others the most accommodated to the weakness of human nature.

Thus we see a religion, in some degree a *matter of fact religion*, growing gradually to its completion; until 'HE, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, spoke in these last days by his Son.'

And thus we observe the first preachers of Christianity, not philosophising on abstract truths, but plainly bearing witness to what had been transacted in their presence.—'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.' And again—'That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.'

This then is the particular characteristic of Christianity, that from its origin till its final consummation, it considers *man* critically *as he is*; and, that is, not as he was deemed by the most enlightened sages of earlier times, but as he has been discovered to be, by one of the most penetrating minds in the world, seventeen hundred years after the christian era. To this, now universally acknowledged notion of man, every thing is adapted, both in what is recorded and what is enjoined in the Scripture. Every observance relates to *facts*, and is fitted to impress them. To strip Christianity, therefore, of any of the observances, which are really of scriptural appointment, would be to sublimate it into philosophical inefficacy. In common life we see the affections little engaged in abstract speculation. They then only are moved when those sensible images, which the laws of nature have made moving, are aptly presented to them.

What, for example, could all the mathematical truth in the world do, in exciting our affections, compared with a tale of human misery, or human magnanimity, even though known to be fabricated for our amusement?—When Christianity then is so obviously, in a great measure, a business of the affections, that we are then only under its influence when we *love and delight in*, as well as *assent to*, or *reason upon* its principles;—shall we cavil at that religion which alone accomplishes its end, on account of those very features of it, which, on every ground of philosophy, and by every proof of efficacy, were the fact to be candidly investigated, render it such as it must be, in order to answer its purpose?

There cannot be a more conclusive internal evidence of our holy religion than this, that in every principle which is established, in every lesson which it inculcates, and in every example which it offers; there is throughout one character that invariably prevails, which is, the truest and soundest *good sense*. The Scripture, while in the main so plain and simple, 'that he may run that readeth,' has accordingly been ever most prized by its profoundest and most sagacious readers. And the longer and more attentively such persons have studied it, the higher has their estimation risen. We will not adduce cases from that constellation of shining lights, the learned churchmen, whose testimony might be objected to, from the very circumstance which ought to enhance its value, their professional attachment, because the name of Bacon, Boyle, and Locke is sufficient.

It will be found on the most impartial scrutiny, that that plan or practice which is clearly opposed to Scripture, is no less really hostile to right reason, and to the true interests of man. And it is scarcely to be doubted, that if we could investigate the multiform history of individuals in the Christian world, it would be indisputable, that a deep impression of scripture facts and principles had proved, beyond comparison, the most successful preservative against the worst evils of human life. Doubtless it has been found most difficult to *retain* such an impression amid the business, and pleasures, and entanglements of the world, but, so far as it has been retained, it has been uniformly the pledge of regularity in the conduct, peace in the mind, and an honourable character in society. Thus much by way of introduction to the following chapter.

HAP. XXXVII.

Of the established church of England.

CHRISTIANITY then only answers its end, when it is established as a paramount principle in the heart, purifying the desires and intentions, tranquillizing the temper, enlarging the affection, and regulating the conduct. But, though this alone be its perfect work, it has subordinate operations, which are not only valuable for their direct results, but seem in the order of Providence, to be preliminary to its more inward and spiritual efficacy.

When we observe how extensive is the outward profession of Christianity, and how obviously limited is a consistently Christian practice; the first emotion of a serious mind is naturally that of regret. But a more considerate

view will give occasion to other feelings. It will be seen, that that outward profession of our holy religion, which is secured by an establishment, is an inestimable blessing to a community; that the public benefits which result from it are beyond reckoning, besides the far greater utility of affording to each individual that light of information, and those means of religious worship, which duly used, will insure his eternal salvation.

That there should therefore be a *visible* as well as an *invisible* church, an instituted, as well as a personal religion, and that the one should embrace whole communities, while the other may extend to a comparative few, appears not only the natural consequence of Christianity, as a religious profession, spreading through society, and necessarily transmitted from father to son; but it seems also that kind of arrangement which divine wisdom would sanction, in order to the continuance of Christianity in the world.

Thus much would rational reflection dictate on a view of the case; but we are not left to our own mere reasonings. What in itself appears so probable, our Saviour has intimated to us an essential part of the divine plan, in several of his parables. What is the leaven hid in the three measures of meal, but real Christianity operating in those happy individuals whose hearts and lives are governed by its influence? And what again is the mass of meal with which the leaven is blended, but the great body of mankind, who, by God's gracious Providence, have been led to assume the Christian profession, and thus to constitute that visible church, whose mixed character is again shown in the subsequent parables of the net cast into the sea, as well as in that of the wheat and the tares.

If, then, the public profession of Christianity be thus explicitly sanctioned by the divine wisdom: if also, our own daily experience shows it to be most beneficial to society, as well as obviously conducive to the inward and spiritual purposes of our religion; we must admit, that the establishment which evidently secures such profession, is an object of inestimable value. It was necessary in the order of nature, that what was to impregnate the world, should be first itself prepared and proved. For three centuries, therefore, it pleased God to leave Christianity to make its way, by its own mere strength, that by its superiority, both to the allurements and the menaces of the world, to all that could be desired, and to all that could be suffered by man, its true nature, and its genuine energy, might be for ever demonstrated; and its efficacy to assimilate, at length, the whole world to itself, be evinced, by its restless growth, in circumstances the most apparently desperate.

During this period, therefore, such instruments alone were used as might serve to evince more clearly, that the 'excellency of the power was of God, and not of men.' But when the season had arrived when the intermixture was to be extensively promoted, then another and very different agency was resorted to; when the world was to be brought into the visible Church, then the powers of the world received that impulse from the hand of heaven, which made them, in a deeper sense than ever before, 'ministers of God for good.'—Then, for the first time, kings and princes embraced the profession of Christianity, and enjoined it by laws and edicts, as well as by still better methods, on the great body of their subjects.

How far the national changes which then took place were voluntary or necessitated, there is no occasion for us to inquire.—'The good which is done upon the earth, God doeth it himself.' And what good, next to the actual giving of the Gospel, has been greater than the providential blessing of the leaven of Christianity with the great mass of human society? If the first generation of those nominal Christians were even pagans in their hearts, that did not lessen the greatness of the benefit to posterity. They passed away, and their paganism passed away with them: and the light of Christianity, invaluable in its immediate, but infinitely more so in its ultimate consequences, became the entailed possession of these European nations, under the double guarantee of popular attachment and political power.

Such was the providential origin of religious establishments. Let those who object to them, only keep in their view, that chain of events by which the Christian profession was made national in any country; let them also inquire the fate of Christianity in those countries, where either no such establishments took place, or where they were overthrown by the ascendancy of the Mahometan potentates. Lastly, let them reflect on the benefit and the comfort of that one single effect of 'kings becoming nursing-fathers, and queens nursing-mothers,' of the visible Church, *the legal enforcement of the Christian Sabbath*,—and then see on what grounds, as friends to good order, as honest citizens, or as consistent Christians, they can oppose or condemn so essential and so effectual an instrument of the best blessings which human kind can enjoy?

If then the *national establishment* of Christianity, even under the most disadvantageous circumstances, became the source of invaluable benefits and blessings; what estimate ought to be formed of *that Christian establishment in particular*, which, on the most impartial survey of all similar institutions which have been known in the Christian world, will be found the most admirably fitted for its purpose?

The established church of England may not, it is true, bear a comparison with theoretic perfection, nor will it gain the approbation of those who require that a visible should possess the qualities of an invisible church, and that every member of a national institution should equal in piety, certain individual Christians; nor, in any point of view, can its real character be ascertained, or its just claims be established, except it be contemplated, as a *fixed institution*, existing from the period of the reformation to the present day, independently of the variations and discordances of the successive multitudes who adhered to it.

Let it then, under this only fair notion of it, be compared with all the other national churches of the reformation, and, on such a comparative

view, its superiority will be manifest. The truth is, our church occupies a kind of middle place; neither multiplying ceremonies, nor affecting pompousness of public worship with the Lutheran church, nor rejecting all ceremonies and all liturgical solemnity with the church of Geneva;—a temperament thus singular, adopted and adhered to, in times of unadvanced light and much polemical dissonance, amid jarring interests and political intrigues, conveys the idea of something more excellent than could have been expected from mere human wisdom.

A national establishment is ill-fitted for its purpose, if it present nothing striking to the external senses or imagination. In order to answer its design, it ought at once to be so outwardly attractive, as to attach the great mass of professing Christians to its ordinances; and yet the substance of these ordinances should be so solid and rational, and so spiritual, as to be fitted to the farther and still more important purpose of infusing inward vital Christianity. These characters, we conceive, are exhibited in the Anglican church, in a degree unexampled in any other Christian establishment. She alone avoids all extremes. Though her worship be wisely popular, it is also deeply spiritual; though simple, it is sublime. She has rejected pompous ceremonies, but she has not therefore adopted an offensive negligence. In laying aside all that was ostentatious, she retained all that is solemn and affecting. Her reasonable service peculiarly exemplifies the apostle's injunction of praying with the understanding as well as with the heart. To both these the chief attention is directed while the imagination and the senses are by no means excluded from regard. It is our Saviour's exquisitely discriminating rule applied to another subject. 'These' says he, (the weightier matters,) 'ye ought to have *done*, and not to leave the others *undone*.'

If these remarks had nothing but opinion to support them, a different opinion might no less fairly be opposed to them. But let a matter of fact question be asked. Which of the protestant establishments has best answered its end: In other words—in which of the protestant countries in Europe, have the fundamental truths of Scripture been most strictly adhered to, and the Christian religion most generally respected? If we inquire into the present circumstances of protestant Europe, shall we not find that, in one class of churches on the continent, the more learned of the clergy commonly become Socinians; while, among the clergy of the other, there appears a strange tendency towards absolute deism? Amongst the laity of both churches, French principles, it may be feared, have so much prevailed, as to become in a great measure their own punishment. For to what other cause but a departure from the faith of their fathers, can we ascribe their having so totally lost the ardour and resolution, which once distinguished their communities? Infidelity takes from the collective body its only sure cement, and from the individual his only certain source of courage. It leaves the mass of the people without *that* possession to be defended, in which all ranks and degrees are alike interested; and takes from the individual that *one* principle which alone can, at all times, raise a human being above his natural weaknesses, and make him superior both to pleasure and pain. While religion was an object with the people alluded to, it inspired the lowest, as well as the highest, with a zeal to defend their country against invaders who, if predominant, would have robbed them of their religious liberty. But now, concern for religion being too generally cooled, they prefer the most disgraceful ease to exertions which would necessarily demand self-denial and might deprive them of that only existence for which infidels *can* be concerned.

Why is it otherwise in England? Why are not we also overspread with pernicious principles and sunk in base pusillanimity?—The Germans were once as brave, the Swiss once as religious as any of us; but bravery and religion seem, as far as we can learn, to have abandoned some of those countries together. In England, blessed be God! things present a very different aspect. We have indeed much to lament, and much, very much to blame; but infidelity does not *triumph*, nor does patriotism decline. Why is it thus? Is it not because the temperament of the English establishment has left no room for passing from one extreme to another; because its public service is of that stirring excellence, which must ever be attractive to the impressible mind, edifying to the pious mind, unimpeachable by the severest reasoner, and awful even to the profligate?

For, in enumerating the merits of our admirable establishment, we must not rest in the superiority of her *forms*, excellent as they are, but must extend the praise, where it is so justly due, to the still more important article of her doctrines. For after all, it is her luminous exhibition of Christian truth, that has been the grand spring and fountain of the good which she has produced. It is the spirituality of her worship, —it is the rich infusion of Scripture,*—it is the deep confessions of sin,—it is the earnest invocations of mercy,—it is the large enumeration of spiritual wants, and the abundant supply of correspondent blessings, with which her liturgy abounds, that are so happily calculated to give the tone of piety to her children.

In forming this invaluable liturgy, there was no arrogant self-conceit on the one hand, no relinquishment of strict judgment on the other. The errors of the Romish church were to be rejected, but the treasures of ancient piety which she possessed, were not to be abandoned. Her formularies contained devotional compositions, not more venerable for their antiquity, than valuable for their intrinsic excellence, being at once simple and energetic, perspicuous and profound. What then was more suitable to the sober spirit of reformation, than to separate those precious remnants of ancient piety from their drossy accompaniments,—and, while these last were deservedly cast away, to mould the pure gold which remained into a new form, fitted at once to interest, and edify the public mind?

* Of the vast importance of this one circumstance, an early proof was given. 'Cranmer,' says the learned author of the Elements of Christian Theology, 'found the people so improved by hearing the Epistles and Gospels, as to be brought to bear the alterations he had provided.

It is worthy of observation, that in all reforms, whether civil or religious, wise and good men prove themselves to be such, by this infallible criterion, that THEY NEVER ALTER FOR THE SAKE OF ALTERING, but in their zeal to introduce improvements, are conscientiously careful to depart no further from established usages, than strict duty and indispensable necessity require.

Instead, therefore, of its being any stigma on our church service, that it was collected from breviaries and missals, it adds substantially to its value. The identity of true Christian piety, in all ages, being hereby demonstrated, in a way as satisfactory to the judgment, as it is interesting to the heart. In such a procedure, Christian liberty was united with Christian sobriety; primitive piety with honest policy.—A whole community was to be attached to the new mode of worship, and, therefore, it was expedient to break their habits no more than Christian purity demanded. They only, however, who actually compare those of our prayers which are selected from Romish formularies, with the originals, can form a just idea with what discriminative judgment the work was executed, and what rich improvements are often introduced into the English collects, so as to heighten the sentiment, yet, without at all impairing the simplicity. Indeed, the wisdom and moderation of the founders of our church were equally conspicuous in the whole of their proceedings; never *strenuously* contending for any points, not even in that summary of Christian doctrines, which was to be the established standard, but for such as affected the grand foundations of faith, hope and charity.

How honourable to our reformers, and to the glorious work in which they so successfully laboured, that in the very first formation of the English church, that care to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials should be so strictly exercised, which the brightest philosophical luminary in his own, or perhaps in any age, some years after, so strongly recommended, and so beautifully illustrated. 'We see Moses,' says lord Bacon, 'when he saw the Israelite and the Egyptian fight, he did not say, why strive ye? but drew his sword and slew the Egyptian. But when he saw two Israelites fight, he said, you are *brethren*, why strive you? If the point of doctrine be an Egyptian, it must be slain by the sword of the Spirit; but if it be an Israelite, though in the wrong, then why strive you? We see of the fundamental points Christ penneth the league thus: *he that is not aginst us is for us.*'* But of points not fundamental thus,—*he that is not against us is with us.*

To the eternal praise then of our reformers, as well as with the deepest gratitude to God, be it said, that in their concern for matters of faith, in which concern they yielded to none of their contemporaries, they intermingled a charity in which they have excelled them all. And, in consequence of this radical and truly Christian liberality, a noble spirit of tolerance has ever been the characteristic of genuine Church of England divines: of those, I mean who have cordially agreed with the first reformers, and wished no deviation from their principles, either in doctrine or in worship; desiring neither to add to, nor diminish, the comely order which *they* had established in the public service; nor to be dogmatical where *they* had been enlarged; nor relaxed where *they* had been explicit: yet ready at all times to indulge the prejudices of their weaker brethren, and to grant to others that freedom of thought, of which, in their own case, they so fully understood the value. Our first reformers were men of eminent piety, and, happily for the interests of genuine religion, far less engaged in controversy than the divines of the continent. Even those of their own nation, who differed from them in lesser points, and with whom they *did* debate, were men of piety also, and entirely agreed with them in doctrines. Hence, the strain of preaching in our Church of England divines, became less polemical and more pious and practical, than that of the clergy of other churches. To this end the book of Homilies was highly conducive, being an excellent model which served to give the example of useful and practical preaching. In this most important particular, and in that of deep and conclusive reasoning, we may assign the decided superiority to English divines, above all those of the continent, though the latter may perhaps, in some instances, dispute with them the palm of eloquence.

From divines of the above character, happily never wanting in any age, our national establishment has ever derived its best strength at home, and its honour and credit in foreign countries. These have made the Anglican church looked up to by all the churches of the reformation. Their learning has been respected, their wisdom has been esteemed, their liberality has been loved and honoured, their piety has been revered, by all of every protestant communion who were capable of discerning and improving excellence; nay, even in the Romish communion, they have sometimes excited a degree of estimation, which nothing could have called forth but the most indisputable superiority.

But, it is not only in the clerical order that the kindly influences of the English establishment have been manifest; they appear in the brightest point of view, in those illustrious laymen whose labours have contributed not less to raise the British name, than the achievements, unexampled as they have been, of our armies or our navies. On account of these men, we have been termed by foreigners, a nation of philosophers; and, for the sake of their writings, English has become not so much a fashionable as, what is far more honourable, a kind of learned language in almost every country in Europe. Yet, in no writers upon earth, has a sense of religion been more evidently the key-stone of their excellence. This it is which gives them that sobriety of mind, that intellectual conscientiousness, that penetrating pursuit, not of subtlety, but of truth; that decorous dignity of language, that cordiality as well as sublimity of moral sentiment and expression, which have procured for them, not merely the suffrage of the understanding, but the tribute of the heart.

And let it be attentively inquired, how they came by this rare qualification? how it happen-

* Lord Bacon on the Advancement of Learning, book second.

ed, that in them, so much more strikingly than in the learned and philosophical of perhaps any other nation, increase of knowledge did not generate scepticism, nor the consciousness of their mental strength inspire them with contempt for the religion of their country? Was it not, that that religion was so modified, as equally to endear itself to the vivid sensibility of youth, the quick intelligence of manhood, the matured reflection of age and wisdom? That it did not on the one hand conceal the beauty and weaken the sense of vital truth, by cumbrous and unnecessary adjuncts;—nor on the other hand withhold from it that graceful drapery, without which, in almost all instances, the imagination, as it were, instinctively, refuses to perform its appropriate function of conveying truth to the heart!—And further, have not the above invaluable effects been owing to this also, that the inherent spirit of christian tolerance, which has been described as distinguishing our communion from every other national communion in the world, by allowing to their minds every just claim, has taken the best possible method of preventing intellectual licentiousness? In fine, to what other causes than those just stated, can we ascribe it, that this country above all others, has been the seat of philosophy, unbounded in its researches, yet modest in its assumptions, and temperate in its conclusions?—Of literary knowledge, not only patiently pursued, and profoundly explored, but wisely digested and usefully applied?—Of religion, in its most rational, most influential, most christian shape and character;—not the dreary labour of superstition, not the wild delirium of fanaticism, but the infallible guide of reason, the invincible guard of virtue, the enjoyment of present peace, and the assurance of future happiness?

But whatever providential causes have hitherto contributed among us to restrain infidelity and profaneness, have we no reason to fear that their operations are growing less and less powerful? And should we not bear in mind, that it is not the *form* of our church establishment, incomparable as that is, which can alone arrest the progress of danger, if there should arise any declension of zeal in supporting its best interests, if ever there should be found any lack of knowledge for zeal to work with. The character also of the reigning prince will always have a powerful effect either in retarding or accelerating the evil.

One of our most able writers on history and civil society,* is perpetually inculcating that no political constitution, no laws, no provision made by former ages, can ever secure the actual enjoyment of political happiness and liberty, if there be not a zeal among the living for the furtherance of these objects. Laws will be misconstrued and fall into oblivion and ancient maxims will be superseded, if the attention of the existing generation be not alive to the subject.

Surely it may be said, at least with equal truth, that no excellence of our religious establishment, no orthodoxy in our articles, no, nor even that liturgy on whose excellences we have delighted to expatiate, can secure the maintenance of true religion, but in proportion as the religious spirit is maintained in our clergy; in proportion as it is diffused among the people; in proportion as it is encouraged from the throne.

If such then be the value, and such the results of the English ecclesiastical establishment, how high is the destiny of that personage whom the laws of England recognise as its supreme head on earth! How important is it, that the prince, charged with such unexampled trust, should feel its weight, should understand its grand peculiarities, and be habitually impressed with his own unparalleled responsibility. To misemploy, in any instances, the prerogative which this trust conveys, is to lessen the stability, and counteract the usefulness of the fairest and most beneficial of all the visible fabrics, erected in this lower world! But what an account would that prince, or that minister have to render, who should *systematically* debase this little less than divine institution, by deliberately consulting, not how the Church of England may be kept high in public opinion, influential on public morals, venerable through the meek yet manly wisdom, the unaffected yet unblemished purity, the energetic yet liberal zeal of its clergy;—but, how it may be made subservient to the trivial and temporary interests of the prevalent party, and the passing hour?

Besides the distribution of dignities, and the great indirect influence which this affords the prince, in the disposal of a vast body of preferment; his wisdom and tenderness of conscience will be manifested also in the appointment of the chancellor, whose church patronage is immense. And in the discharge of that most important trust, the appointment of the highest dignitaries, the monarch will not forget, that his responsibility is proportionably the more awful, because the exercise of his power is less likely to be controuled, and his judgment to be thwarted, than may often happen in the case of his political servants.

Nor will it, it is presumed, be deemed impertinent to remark, that the just administration of this peculiar power may be reasonably expected as much, we had almost said even more, from a female, than from a monarch of the other sex. The bishops chosen by those three judicious queens, Elizabeth, Mary, and Caroline, were generally remarkable for their piety and learning. And let not the writer be suspected of flattering either the queen or the bishop by observing, that among the wisdom and abilities which now adorn the bench, a living prelate high in dignity, in talents, and in Christian virtue, is said to have owed his situation to the discerning eye of his present majesty.

What an ancient cannon, cited by the judicious Hooker, suggests to bishops on the subject of preferment is equally applicable to kings. —*It expressly forbiddeth them to be led by human affection in bestowing the things of God.**

* Ferguson.

* The Ecclesiastical Polity.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

Superintendence of Providence manifested in the local circumstances and in the civil and religious history of England.

Among the various subjects on which the mind of the royal pupil should be exercised, there is none more appropriate, than that which might, perhaps, be most fitly denominated, *the providential History of England*. That it has not hitherto engaged attention, in any degree suitable to its importance, is much more an apology for its being, in the present instance, specially adverted to, than reason for its being any longer neglected.

The marks of divine interference, in the general arrangement of states and empires, are rendered so luminous by the rays which Scripture prophecy has shed upon them, as to strike every mind which is at once attentive and candid, with a force not to be resisted. But, while this indisputable truth leads us necessarily to infer, that a like superintendance to that which is over the whole, acts likewise respecting all the separate parts; the actual tracing this superintendence, in the occurrences of particular nations, must, in general, be a matter of difficulty and doubt, as that light of prophecy, which falls so brightly on the central dome of the temple, cannot reasonably be hoped for, when we turn into the lateral recesses.

There are instances, however, in which God's providential works shine so clearly 'by their own radient light,' as to demonstrate the hand which fashioned, and the skill which arranged them. And though others are of a more doubtful nature; yet, when the attainments of any one particular nation become matter of general influence, so that what was, at first, the fruit of merely local labour, or the effect of a peculiar combination of local circumstances, becomes from its obvious utility or intrinsic excellence an object to other surrounding countries, and grows at length into an universal benefit;—in such a distinction, we can hardly forbear to trace something so like a consistent plan of operations that the duty of observing and acknowledging it, seems incumbent on such communities as appear to have been thus signally favoured. What advantage, for instance, has the whole civilized world derived from the philosophizing turn of the ancient Greeks! How widely extensive, and how durable has been its influence.

Of what importance are the benefits, which the politic spirit of the Roman empire diffused among the countries of Europe, most of which, to this day, acknowledge the hand that reared them from barbarism, by still retaining those laws which that hand transcribed for them, as if Rome were allowed to do that for men's circumstances, which Greece was permitted to effect for their minds!

But a third instance is encumbered with less difficulty,—the designation of Judea to be the local source of true religion. In this small province of the Roman empire, what a scene was transacted, and from those transactions, what a series of consequences have followed, and what a system of influences has been derived, operating, and still to operate on individuals—communities—nations, in ways, and with effects, the happiest, or most awful, as they are embraced or rejected; and leading to results not to be calculated even as to this world,—but wholly inconceivable, as to that future world where all the deep purposes of God are to have their perfect consummation.

But, if such has been the method of Providence in those great designs, which have heretofore been carried on in the world, can we suppose that the same plan is not substantially pursued in his present arrangements? Are not blessings still to be conferred on society? Blessings. yet in general unknown. and greater measures of those which are already in part attained?—How rare, for example, has been hitherto the blessing of complete civil government—of such a political system as combines the apparent contrarieties of public security with personal liberty! An object aimed at by the wisest legislators of earlier times, but regarded by them as a beautiful theory, incapable of being realized! Still more—How limited is the attainment of religious truth *of well-weighed well-digested religious belief*—and of *well-conceived, well-regulated divine worship!* Christianity exists in the Scripture, like virgin gold in the mine; but how few, comparatively, have been able to extract it without loss, or to bring it into public circulation without deplorable alloy! How erroneous, in most instances, are those modes and exercises of it, which are adopted by states and governments; and how seldom does it seem rightly apprehended, even by the most enlightened individuals! To suppose things will always remain in this state, is little short of an imputation on divine wisdom. But, in the mean time, how disastrous are the consequences to individuals and to society!

If there be then a country, long and signally distinguished in both these important instances—in the former, so as to have been the object of universal admiration;—in the latter, so as to have been looked up to by all the most enlightened parts of the Christian world.—If there be such a country, can we help regarding its superiority to other countries as the result of a providential destination, as clear as that which allotted philosophy to ancient Greece, and civil polity to ancient Rome?—And may it not even be added, as really divine, though not miraculous, as that which gave true religion to ancient Judea.

If England be this community, if England be the single nation upon earth,—where that checked and balanced government,—that temperament of monarchic, aristocratic and popular rule, which philosophic statesmen, in ancient times, admired so much in theory, has been actually realized—If it be also distinguished by a temperament in religious concerns little less peculiar, is not every thinking member of such a community bound to acknowledge with deepest gratitude, so extraordinary a distinction? And what employment of thought can be more interesting than to trace the providential means by which such unexampled benefits and blessings have been conferred upon our country!

To enter at large into so vast a subject, would be an impracticable attempt, on such an occasion as the present. It would itself furnish materials for a volume rather than for a few pages;*

* The train of thought pursued in this and the following chapter, as well as some of the thoughts themselves,

and to treat it with justice would be a task, to which the best informed and profoundest mind would alone be competent. A few scattered observations, therefore, are all that we can pretend to offer, not however without hope, that they will excite to a deeper and more extended investigation. We are told by St. Paul, that 'he who made of one blood all nations, fixed not only the time before appointed (the epochs of their rise and fall) but also the bounds of their habitation.' The result of this created arrangement, respecting the greater divisions of the earth, Europe, Asia, and Africa, separated, yet connected by that inland ocean the Mediterranean Sea, have been already noticed. But, nothing has been more pregnant in its consequences in this general plan than the insulated situation of Great Britain, with respect to our national circumstances.—If we are at this day free, while so many neighbouring nations are enslaved.—If we stand erect, while they are trampled on—let us not entirely attribute it to any superiority in ourselves, of spirit, of wisdom, or strength; but let us also humbly and gratefully ascribe it to that appointment of the Creator, which divided us from the continent of Europe. Had we been as accessible to the arms of France, as Holland, Switzerland, or the Austrian Netherlands, we might perhaps have been involved in the same calamities. But we cannot stop here. The entire series of our history, as a nation, seems in a great measure to have been derived from this source; and every link in the chain of our fortune bears some significant mark of our local peculiarity. Without this, where would have been our commercial opulence or our maritime power? If we had not been distinct as a country we had not been distinct as a people. We might have imbibed the taints, been moulded by the manners, and immerged in the greatness of our more powerful neighbours. It was that goodness which made us an island, that laid the foundation of our national happiness. It was by placing us in the midst of the waters that the Almighty prepared our country for those providential uses to which it has served and is yet to serve in the great scheme of his dispensations. Thus, then, we behold ourselves raised as a nation above all the nations of the earth by that very circumstance which made our country be regarded, two thousand years ago, only as a receptacle for the refuse of the Roman empire!

To this, evidently, it has been owing, that amongst us, the progress of society, from barbarianism to high improvement, has not only been more regular, but more radical and entire, as to all the portions and circumstances of the body politic, than in any instance with which we are acquainted. Shut in from those desolating blasts of war which have ever and anon been sweeping the continent, the culture of our moral soil has been less impeded, and the seeds which have been sown have yielded ampler, as well as maturer harvests. We have had our vicissitudes—but in a manner peculiar to ourselves. They seem clearly providential, and not fortuitous; since it is certain that the agitations which we have experienced, and the apparent calamities which we have suffered have been, in almost every instance, signally conducive to our advancement. When England became possessed by the Saxons, she appeared only to be sharing the fate of other European countries; all of which, about that period, or soon after, became the prey of similar hordes of invaders. But a difference of result, in our particular instance, arising chiefly from our insular situation, after some time, presents itself to us, as already marking that happy destination with which Providence intended to favour us.

It has been observed by historians, that when an army of those northern invaders took possession of any country, they formed their establishment with a view of self-defence, much more than to civil improvement. They knew not how suddenly they might be attacked by some successful army of adventurers; and therefore says Dr. Robertson, 'a feudal kingdom resembles a military establishment, rather than a civil institution.' 'Such a policy,' adds the same historian, 'was well calculated for defence, against the assaults of any foreign power; but its provisions for the interior order and tranquillity of society, was extremely defective; the principles of disorder and corruption being discernible in that constitution under its best and most perfect form.'*

To this 'feudal system,' however, the newly established potentates of the continent seem to have been impelled by necessity; but an inevitable consequence was, that that taste for liberty, which had animated their followers in their native forests, could no longer be cherished, and was of course doomed to extinction.

In Britain alone such a necessity did not exist. The possession of the country being once accomplished, its tenure was comparatively secured by the surrounding ocean. Defence was not to be neglected; but danger was not imminent. Thus no new habit was *forced* on the new settlers, so as to expel their original propensities; and accordingly whatever means of safety they might have resorted to against each other, during the multiplicity of these governments, we see at the distance of four centuries, Alfred, turning from successful warfare against invaders, to exercise that consummate wisdom, with which his mind was enriched, in systematizing those very aboriginal principles of Saxon liberty. A civil polity was thus erected, which was not only in its day the most perfect scheme of government that had yet existed, but it also was formed of such materials, and established on such a solid foundation, as never after to be wholly demolished; until at length, it has been gradually wrought into that magnificent fabric, which, through the bless-

both here, and in one or two former passages may perhaps be recognized by the Rev. and learned Doctor Miller, late fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, as a-kin to those views of providential history, which he has given in a course of lectures in that college. The author gladly acknowledges having received, through a friend, a few valuable hints from this source, of which it is earnestly hoped the public may in due time be put in full possession

* Robertson's View of the State of Europe, prefixed to Charles V. Sect. 1.

ing of heaven, is at this day the glory and the defence of our island.

In these rudiments, then, of the first English constitution, let us gratefully recognize the first most striking indication of a particular providence presiding over our country. A genius, the first of his age, is raised in a remote and insulated part of Europe,—where at first view, it might be thought his talents must be destitute of their proper sphere of action. But in what other European country could his enlarged views have been in any adequate degree realized?—Where the feudal government was established, such wise and liberal arrangements as those of Alfred were necessarily precluded; at least they could not have been introduced, without stripping such a government of its essential characters; Alfred's system being as strictly *civil*, as the other was *military*. He provided sufficiently for external safety, but it was internal security and tranquility to which his exquisite policy was peculiarly directed. And from its correspondence with right reason, with the native spirit of the people, and with the local circumstances of the country, it so rooted itself in the English soil, as to out-live all the storms of civil discord, as well as the long winter of the Norman tyranny.

Is it not then remarkable that, when such a concurrence of favourable circumstances existed in that very sequestred spot should arise an individual, so precisely fitted to turn them to, what appears, their allotted purpose? Had there not been an Alfred to accomplish the work, all these capabilities might soon have vanished, and our national happiness never have been realized. On the other hand, had Alfred lived without his appropriate sphere of action, he would no doubt have been a successful warrior, a gracious prince, and clearly, as far as the state of men's minds admitted, a friend to letters, and such rude arts as were then in use; but he would not have been venerated, at the distance of a thousand years as the founder of the best scheme of laws, and the happiest system of government, that the world ever saw. Such a correspondence, then, of so distinguished an agent to so apt a sphere of action, and attended with results so permanent, so beneficial, and so widely influential on human society, was surely far above fortuitous coincidence. Was it not, on the contrary, an adaptation so self-evident, as can only be ascribed to the special interference of over-ruling Providence?

It is true, that by the Norman conquest, the benefits derived from this wise and happy establishment appeared for the time overwhelmed by a threefold tyranny,—regal, feudal, and ecclesiastical. But this, on an attentive view, will appear no less to have been over-ruled for good. To repress for the purpose of excitement, and to employ gross admixtures in order to higher purification, are procedures congruous with all the laws of nature.

In a constitution formed in so dark an age, and adapted to so rude a people, there could be little more than the crude elements of such a political system, as more advanced times would require. Yet had the enjoyment of those earlier privileges remained undisturbed, nothing better might have been aimed at! and instead of that progressive advance, with which we have been blessed, our nation might, at this day, have only been distinguished by a blind and stupid attachment to some obsolete forms of liberty, from which all substantial worth had long since departed. For the prevention of such an evil, human foresight could make no provision; and we may now look back with wonder, on the wisdom, as well as efficacy of the process. The original plan was guarded by the same gracious hand, until the habits induced by it were fixed in the minds of Englishmen;—then it was suspended, that they might struggle to regain it; and by the activity thus excited, and more and more elicited by new competitions, they might at length attain to the highest civil and political happiness, which has been enjoyed in this imperfect state of being.

But on a yet more enlarged view of our national progress, shall we not be led to conclude, that something more than the improvement of our political constitution was in the design of Providence, when the Norman dynasty became possessed of the throne? A far more important reformation, than that of human laws, or political systems was at length to take place. And in this great ecclesiastical revolution, England was intended to act a conspicuous part. For this, even these preparatory steps would be necessary. And may we not clearly trace such steps from the epoch of which we are speaking? The encroachments of the papal see had, till then, been comparatively little felt in England. But the Norman princes introduced foreign bishops, who exercised in the church as galling a dominion, as that of their royal patrons in the state. 'The consciences of men,' says Sir William Blackstone, 'were enslaved by sour ecclesiastics, devoted to a foreign power and unconnected with the civil state under which they lived; who now imported from Rome, for the first time, the whole farrago of superstitious novelties, which had been engendered by the blindness and corruption of the times, between the first mission of Augustine the monk, and the Norman conquest.'*

Had these pernicious practices been *gradually* and *insensibly* introduced, as they were in most countries on the continent, they would have been inevitably combined with the common habits of the people. But being thus suddenly and forcibly imposed, in conjunction too with such a mass of political grievances, their almost necessary tendency was to excite a spirit of resistance. We accordingly find, that in every advance which was made towards regaining a free government, a conquest was gained over some instances of ecclesiastical as well as of political tyranny; than which, what more effectual course could the most sagacious foresight have pursued, for rousing the national mind from the dead drowsiness of superstition, and preparing it to give a cordial reception to that light of religious truth, which, when the proper season should arrive, was to beam forth with peculiar brightness on this favoured country?

But it is not only in its encroachments and

* Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. iv. last ch.

severities that we are to regard the Norman government as an instrument of Providence. It, doubtless, was the means of much direct and positive good. The minds of Englishmen needed improvement, still more than their civil constitution. Alfred had attempted to sow the seeds of learning, as well as of jurisprudence, amongst his countrymen; but to inspire a barbarous people with a love of literature, was what neither he nor his master, Charlemagne, was able in any great degree to accomplish. An advance of general civilization was necessary to strike out such a disposition; and it was not until toward the beginning of the 12th century, that any part of Western Europe appeared to have been visited with the dawn of an intellectual day. A connexion, therefore, with the continent previously to that period, could not have served the moral, and might have injured the political interests of our island. But that it should, just at that time, be brought into such circumstances, as should ensure its participation in all the mental acquirements, of the neighbouring countries, appears evidently to bespeak the same superintendence, as in the instances already noticed.

It is, however, in the great event of the English reformation, that we perceive, as has been already observed,* the most striking marks of divine direction; and it seems to discover to us, why it has pleased God to distinguish us by so many previous instances of favour. We were not only to be blessed with the light of truth ourselves, but we were to be in some sort, 'a city set upon a hill.' The peculiar temperament of the English protestant establishment, which places it in a kind of middle line between the churches of the continent, has been also noticed in a former chapter. But is it not evident, that our national church, humanly speaking, derived that temperament from a previously formed national character? 'The English,' says Voltaire, 'into whom nature has infused a spirit of independence, adopted the opinion of the reformers, but mitigated them, and composed from them a religion peculiar to themselves.'† It is seldom, that, on such a subject, this acute but most perverted pen has so justly described the fact. But, what a striking testimony is this, not only to the worth of that national character, which thus distinguished itself from the whole Christian world, but also to the depth of that Divine wisdom, which made so many remote and unconnected contingences work together in producing so valuable a result!

In establishing a religion, which is founded on truth, and which consists essentially in the love of God and man, what more suitable dispositions could there be provided, than an *independent spirit* and a *mitigating temper*? That both these were eminently exemplified by our venerable reformers, need not here be proved. Nor is it necessary to enlarge upon the obvious tendency of the English laws and constitution, to form such dispositions in those who lived within their influence. If this tendency were doubtful, a striking fact in after times might serve to illustrate it. I mean, that steady zeal with which all the great constitutional lawyers, during the agitations of the seventeenth century, endeavoured to preserve to the English church establishment that very temperament, which had so happily entered into its first formation. Nor can we pass over the care which was taken, in the very occurrences of the reformation, for adapting it to the *independent spirit* of the English, and also for perpetuating, in the establishment itself, that *mild and mitigating temper* which had influenced its first founders.

It was indispensable that the change in the church establishment should be accomplished by the paramount powers of the state; they alone being either legally, or naturally competent. But no act of a king or council, or even of a parliament, was adequate to effect in the minds of the English public, that rational and cordial acquiescence in the new state of things, without which it must have been inefficient, as to influence, and insecure as to duration.

But for this, Providence itself made admirable provision. The pious and amiable Edward was kept upon the throne, until all that was necessary to be done, in an external and political way had been effected.—Then, for a time, the old system was permitted to return, with all its horrible accompaniments, in order, as it should seem, that the protestant church of England might not rest upon human laws *alone*, but might appear to have originated in the same essential principles with those of the apostolic church, and to have been constituted by men of a like spirit, who, when called to it, were similarly prepared to seal their testimony with their blood.

The service that these illustrious men had done, by their temperate wisdom, and admirable judgment, in the reign of Edward, in compiling such a liturgy, and establishing such a worship, and such a form of doctrine, is ever to be held in grateful remembrance. But their passive virtue, their primitive heroism, in patiently, and even joyfully dying for those truths which they had conscientiously adopted; this it was which established protestantism in the hearts of the English populace! They saw the infernal cruelty of the popish leaders, and the calm magnanimity of the protestant martyrs. They saw these holy men, whose connexion with secular politics might be thought to have corrupted them, and whose high station in society might be supposed to have enervated them, facing death in its most dreadful form, with more than human tranquillity! They saw all this, and the impression made upon them was like that which was made on the Israelites at Mount Carmel, by the event of the memorable contest between the priests of Baal, and the prophets of the Lord. Accordingly on the death of Mary, the accession of Elizabeth excited universal joy.—The acquiescence of the people in the changes made by Henry, and even by Edward, were little more than acts of necessity, and therefore implied no revolution in the general opinion. But *now* it was evinced, by every possible proof, that a thorough detestation of popery had extended itself through the whole community. 'Were we to adopt,' says Goldsmith, 'the maxim of the catholics, that evil may be done for the production of good, one might say, that the persecutions in Mary's reign were permitted only to bring the

* Chap. xxiv.

† Siecle de Louis XIV. chap. xxxii.

kingdom over to the protestant religion. The people had formerly been compelled to embrace it, and their fears induced them to conform, but now almost the whole nation were protestants from inclination.' Nothing can surely be more just than the substance of this sentiment. The lively writer seems only to have forgotten that we may ascribe to divine Providence the permission of evil, in order to a greater good, without sanctioning any maxim, revolting in theory, or dangerous in practice.

CHAP. XXXIX.

The same subject continued. Tolerant spirit of the church. Circumstances which led to the revolution—And to the providential succession of the house of Hanover.

The circumstances attending the reformation, which has been most regretted, was, that a portion of the protestants were dissatisfied with it, as not coming up to the extent of their ideas; and that this laid the foundation of a system of dissent, which broke the uniformity of public worship, and led, at length, to a temporary overthrow, both of the ecclesiastical and civil constitution.

On these events, as human transactions, our subject does not lead us to enlarge. If the above remarks, with those in a foregoing chapter, on the peculiar characters of the English establishment be just, these persons, however conscientious, were opposing, without being aware of it, an institution which, from its excellent tendency and effects, seems to have been sanctioned by Providence. But may not even their opposition, and subsequent dissent, be considered in the same light as those other transactions, which have been mentioned; that is, as permitted by the all-wise Disposer, in order to beneficial results, which could not in the nature of things, according to our conception, have been equally produced through any other instrumentality! For example: did it not supply the aptest means, which we can conceive, for answering the important purpose, which was mentioned above—*the perpetuating in the establishment itself, that mild and mitigating temper, which had so signally influenced its first founders.*

If Christian virtue be, in every instance, the result, and the reward, of conflict; and if each virtue be formed, as it were, out of the ruins of the opposite vice; then may we not deem it morally certain, that a Christian community, which 'God delighted to honour,' should, as well as individuals, have an opportunity suitable to its circumstances, of not being 'overcome of evil,' but of 'overcoming evil with good?' And would it not, therefore, appear probable that, though it should possess that political strength, and that portion of outward dignity, which might be necessary to its efficiency as a national establishment, it should also have some opposition to encounter, some trials to sustain, some calumnies to surmount, some injuries to forgive? Would not such circumstances strengthen its claim to being deemed an integral part of the church militant? and would they not fit it for answering all the purposes of a Christian establishment, far better than if it had possessed that exclusive ascendancy, which should leave no room for the exercise of passive, and almost supersede the necessity even of active virtue?

That the schism of which we speak, was permitted by Providence, for some such purpose as that just described, appears probable, from the agreement of such an intention with that wise and temperate plan by which the reformation had been effected; from the obvious consistency of providing for the continuance of that moderate and mitigating temper of the first reformers; and, above all, because it is evident that the event in question has actually answered this valuable purpose: the most eminent divines of our church having been generally as much distinguished for candour towards those who differed from them, as for ability and firmness in maintaining their own more enlarged mode of conduct.

That they could not have so fully manifested these amiable and truly Christian qualities, in a state of things where there was nothing to call them forth, is self-evident; and it is almost as certain, that even their possession of such virtues must depend upon their having had motives to exercise them. We accordingly perceive, in the lives and writings of the great luminaries of our church, not only a happy prevalence of liberal principles, and charitable feelings, but also the very process, if we may so speak, by which these principles and feelings were formed. From having continually in their view a set of persons, who had *substantially* the same faith, yet differed in modes of worship, we see them acquiring a peculiar habit of distinguishing between the essentials and circumstantials of religion. Their judgment becomes strong, as their charity becomes enlarged, and above all other divines, perhaps, they investigate religion as philosophers, without injury to the humility of their faith, or the fervency of their devotion. In almost every other communion (though with some admirable exceptions) deep contemplative piety often appears associated with some sentiment or practice, which is apt to abate our estimation of the rationality of the party, or if rationality be preserved, there is too often some diminution of the pious affections. And what proves, that, from the seeming evil of which we have spoken, God has by his overruling influence deduced this good, is, that the completest spirit of toleration, and this high description of character, have not been commonly united, but that seasons which peculiarly called forth in churchmen the exercise of Christian forbearance, were also singularly fruitful in examples of this sublime and philosophic piety.*

In fact, whether we consider the circumstances under which the church of England was formed, the language in which she expresses her sense of the Christian doctrines, the spirit which pervades all her formularies, or the temper which has distinguished the first founders, and all their genuine successors; she evidently appears designed by Eternal Wisdom to

* See bishop Burnet's history of his own times.

have been a tolerant church; and by being such, to be the means of serving the great cause of Christianity, in certain important instances; which could only be accomplished in a state of *religious liberty*. In too many other Christian countries, the established religion has appeared to rest *entirely* upon a political foundation. In consequence of this, men of lively talents have too generally, in such countries, become infidels. In England, the tolerant nature of the church establishment, in honourably maintaining, and giving the highest reverence to a national form of worship, but allowing individuals their unrestrained choice, has left religion itself to be a matter of reason and conviction, as really as it was in the primitive times; and the consequence has been, that reason and conviction have signally done their part. Infidels have made their utmost efforts, with every aid that perverted talents and misapplied learning could give them; but all they could accomplish, has been to call forth far more powerful minds to defeat them with their own weapons; and to demonstrate, that though the divine religion of the Gospel leans on political support, for the sake of greater public utility, yet its appropriate strength is that of *invariable reason*, *irrefragible truth*, and *self-evident excellence*.

And while the English establishment has thus served the general interests of religion, she has most substantially served herself. Making her appeal to reason, she has been estimated accordingly; and what she has not endeavodred to extort by force, has been greatly yielded to her from rational attachment. It was natural, that the toleration which was given, should, in so exclusive a community, be largely made use of. But this leaves room for the establishment to try its comparative fitness to attach more minds, in which, be it said without invidiousness, the result has at all times been such, as signally to strengthen whatever has been adduced to illustrate the high providential uses of the established church of England.

Still, however, as the natural and proper tendency of the very best things may be thwarted by opposite influences, we ought to be aware that the genuine tendency of the establishment to attach men's minds, and recommend itself by its own excellence, should not be trusted in so confidentially, as that any of those to whom this precious deposit is committed should, from an idea that its influence cannot be weakened, become supine, while its enemies are alive and active. We do not mean, that they should oppose the adversaries of the church by acrimonious controversy, but by the more appropriate weapons of activity and diligence. We may reasonably presume, that the Almighty having wrought such a work for us at the Reformation, will still continue his blessing, while the same means are employed to maintain, which were used to establish it. But to this end every aid should be resorted to, every method should be devised, by which the great mass of the people may be brought to the public worship of the church. To one most important means we have already adverted,* and it cannot be too much insisted on—that the lower classes, among which the defection is greatest, should betimes receive an impression on their minds, not only of God's goodness and mercy, but of his *power* and *supremacy*; and also, that God is the real original authority by which 'kings reign, and princes decree justice;' by which obedience and loyalty to government are enforced, and all the subordinate duties of life required of them. It is from the pulpit, undoubtedly, that every duty, both to God and man, is best inculcated, and with a power and sanction peculiar to itself; and it is the clergy that must prepare for God faithful servants and true worshippers; and for the king a willing and obedient people.

But the clergy, however zealous, pious, and active, cannot find time to do all that might be done. A people might be prepared for the clergy themselves. The minds of children should be *universally* familiarized with the moving stories, and their affections excited by the amiable characters in the Bible. When the beautiful allegories of the New Testament have been not only studied, but properly interpreted to them; when their memories have been stored with such subjects and passages as constantly occur in preaching, the service of the church, by becoming more intelligible, will become more attractive. And as we have already observed, with their religious instructions, there should be mixed a constant sense of their *own church*, the privileges belonging to it, the mischief of departing from it, the duties which lie upon them as members of it. They should be taught the nature of the government of this church, the authority from which it is derived, and their duty and obligations, not as children only, but through life to its ministers. They should be taught what all the offices and institutions of the church mean; that none of them are empty ceremonies, but arrangements of genuine wisdom, and to be valued and used accordingly.

We will venture to say, that were such a mode of training the lower classes *every where* adopted, they would then, not *occasionally*, fall in with the stream on Sundays, and be mixed, they know not why, with a congregation of customary worshippers; but they would come with ability to understand, and dispositions to prefer the established mode of worship; their ideas and sentiments would readily mix and assimilate with what they saw and heard. And thus an habitual veneration, both for the church and its pastors, would be an additional preparation for the gradual influence of real religion on their minds. But while these modes of instruction may be maintained by the leisure and the liberality of the laity, the clergy must be the life, and soul and spirit of them.

But to return.—Perhaps, in a fair view of the importance of that truly Christian liberty, which ever since the revolution of 1688 has been established in England, it might be doubted, whether this was not the ultimate object, on account of which, the civil rights of the English community were so providentially fostered. Certain it is, that at every period of our history when an advance is made in civil matters, some step appears generally to have been gained in ecclesiastical concerns also: and the completion of the

* Chap. xviii.

one is equally that of the other. But it seems as if the distinct agency of Providence, in bringing our church to that avowed and established tolerance, which was alike congenial to its spirit, and necessary to its purpose, is even more remarkable than that series of interpositions which has been referred to in the civil history of the country. And let it not be forgotten, that the toleration of our church is connected with our national love of civil liberty, and that the state also is tolerant.*

The long reign of queen Elizabeth seems to have been designed for the purpose of consolidating and perpetuating the great work which had been accomplished. During that period, all the energies of the prerogative were exercised for the exclusive maintenance of the established religion. And may we not believe, that this was necessary, till the new order of things should have established itself in the habits of the people.

That neither civil nor religious liberty was fully enjoyed in England till the revolution, will not be denied. And that the weak, and sometimes most erroneous conduct of the race of Stuart was providentially over-ruled, so as to lead to that glorious consummation, is equally obvious. May we not then suppose, that this family was brought upon the throne for this purpose, when we see, that when that object was ripe for accomplishment, the family, in its male line, was excluded from the sovereignty, on the clearest grounds of invincible necessity, and hopeless bigotry; an event, the occasion for which was as much to be deplored, as its motives are to be revered, and its consequences to be gloried in. This revolution was one of those rare and critical cases, which can never be pleaded as a precedent by discontent or disaffection. It was a singular instance when a high duty was of necessity superseded by a higher; and when the paramount rights of law and conscience united in urging the painful but irresistible necessity.

God has made human society progressive, by the laws of nature, as well as by the order of Providence. At some periods, this progress seems accelerated. It is, doubtless, the wisdom of those who preside over communities, to mark all such periods, and instead of *resisting*, to *regulate* the progress. This did not the unfortunate house of Stuart. Their political errors shall not here be enumerated. Probably they would have been preserved from them if they had not fought against divine Providence, in several instances. The spirit of the English reformation was that of rational but strict piety. This strictness, the conduct both of James and even of the first Charles, had a tendency to extinguish, by sanctioning, and, in a degree, enjoining the profanation of the Lord's day. The order of public worship, as established by the reformers, was sufficiently majestic;—no decorous circumstance being wanting, no exceptionable ceremonies being admitted. Instead of wisely and steadily guarding this admirable arrangement from encroachments, the unfortunate Charles endeavoured to bring back these genuflections, and other ceremonies which the first reformers had discarded; and enforced these innovations by a severity, still more abhorrent from the temper of the Anglican church. Under such mismanagement, these dissentient principles, which existed since the reformation, were fanned into that furious flame, from which the English constitution in church and state seems to have come forth unhurt, only because the designs of over-ruling Providence required their preservation.

The second Charles, untaught by the calamities of his virtuous but misguided father, disregarded all principle in his public, and outraged all decency in his private conduct. His reign was a continual rebellion against that Providence, which had destined the English nation to exemplify, both good government and good morals, to the surrounding world. Perhaps, however, nothing short of the enormities of himself, and the misconduct of his successor, could have been sufficient to impel the English, after the miseries they had so lately experienced from anarchy, to the vindication of their just, constitutional rights. And probably again, they would not have possessed that temper, which kept them from demanding *more* than their just rights, if they had not received that previous discipline from the hand of heaven. It is worthy of notice, that when the house of Stuart was dispossessed of the throne of England, that same Providence caused a respite in favour of those two* princesses who had not participated in the vices of their father's house. Of these, the elder was made a chief instrument in the great work which was to be accomplished. She was a cordial protestant, and a pious Christian: and we cannot doubt, but her marriage with that prince, who was appointed to perfect our liberties, was a special link in the chain of intermediate causes. She became a true English sovereign: a lover of the establishment, and an example of christian charity. Strictly and habitually devout amid all the temptations of a court, she was prepared to meet death with almost more than resignation.

The character of her sister was much less impressive; her good qualities being better fitted for a private life than a throne. It would be hard to charge her with inheriting the faults of her ancestors, from all the grosser instances of which she was clearly exempt. Yet there certainly appears, in her attachment, much of that weak subjection of mind, (and a little, it may be feared of that dissimulation too,) which had been so manifest in some former monarchs of her family. Yet even this weakness was overruled to great purposes. Had her attachment to the duchess of Marlborough been more moderate, the duke might not have possessed that supreme authority, which enabled him to humble, by so unexampled a series of victories, that power which had been the scourge of protestantism, and the pest of Europe. And had her temper been less mutable, it might not have been so easy to accomplish a peace, when the reasonable ends of war had been so fully answered.

* It is to be lamented that there was a most unhappy instance of departure from this spirit in the reign of Charles II.

* Mary and Anne.

It would almost seem that the issue of this princess was deemed by Providence too central a branch of the Stuart family, to be entrusted with the newly renovated constitution. A more distant connexion had already been specially trained for this most important trust, though with little apparent probability of being called to exercise it, the princess Anne having been no less than seventeen times pregnant. The death of the duke of Gloucester, the last of her family, at length turned the eyes of the English public towards the princess Sophia; from henceforth she and her issue were recognized as presumptive heirs to the crown. Many of the events which occurred during the last years of queen Anne's reign, served not a little to enhance to all who were cordially attached to the English constitution, the providential blessing of so suitable a succession.

A more remarkable event is scarcely to be found in the annals of the world. Nothing could be more essential to the interests of British liberty, than that they, who were concerned for its maintenance, should be possessed of the promptest and most unexceptionable means of filling the vacant throne. No prince was fitted to their purpose, who was not zealously attached to the protestant religion; and it was desirable that he should, at the same time, possess such a title, on ground of consanguinity, as that the principle of hereditary monarchy might be as little departed from as the exigencies of the case would admit. For the securing of both these radical objects, what an adequate provision was made in the princess Sophia, and her illustrious offspring! The connexion thus near was made interesting by every circumstance which could engage the hearts of English protestants. The princess Sophia was the only remaining child of that only remaining daughter of James the first, who being married to one of the most zealous protestant princes of the empire, became his partner in a series of personal and domestic distress, in which his committing himself, on the cause of the protestants of Bohemia, involved him and his family for near half a century. In her, all the rights of her mother, as well as of her father, were vested; and while by the electorial dignity, (of which her father had been deprived) being restored to her husband, the duke of Hanover, she seemed, in part, compensated for the afflictions of her earlier life,—her personal character, in which distinguished wit and talents were united with wisdom and piety,* both these last probably taught her in the school of adversity, procured for her the admiration of all who knew her, as well as the veneration of those whose religious sentiments were congenial with her own.

Such was the mother of George the first! She lived, enjoying her bright faculties to a very advanced age, to see a throne prepared for her son far more glorious than that from which her father had been driven; or, what to her excellent mind was still more gratifying, she saw herself preserved, after the extinction of all the other branches of her paternal house, to furnish in the most honourable instance possible, an invaluable stay and prop for that cause, on account of which her parents and their children seemed, for a time, to have 'suffered the loss of all things.'

Whether, then, we consider the succession of the house of Hanover, as the means of finally establishing our civil and religious constitution, which then only can be regarded as having attained a perfect triumph over every kind of oppression;—or whether we view it as a most signal act of that retributive goodness which has promised 'that every one who forsaketh house, or brethren, or lands, for his sake, shall receive manifold more even in this present life.' I say, in whichsoever light we contemplate it,—especially if we connect it with the series of events in England,—and, above all, compare it with the fate of the family from which the parent princess had sprung—but which, after being chastised to no purpose, was rejected, to make room for those, who had suffered in so much nobler a cause, and with so much better effect,—what can we say, but with the Psalmist, 'that promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor yet from the south. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full mixed, and he poureth out of the same. But as for the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. All the horns also of the wicked shall be cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.'

Another less momentous, yet highly interesting instance of providential remuneration, connected with this great event, must not be passed over. It shall be given in the words of a living and a near observer. 'A wife,' says bishop Burnet, 'was to be sought for prince Charles (the emperor's brother, whom the allies wished to establish on the Spanish throne) among the protestant courts, for there was not a suitable match in the popish courts. He had seen the princess of Anspach, and was much taken with her, so that great applications were made to persuade her to change her religion; but she could not be prevailed on to buy a crown at so dear a rate. And soon after, she was married to the prince Electoral of Brunswick; which gave a glorious character of her to this nation. And her pious firmness is like to be rewarded, even in this life, by a much better crown than that which she rejected.'* Surely this portion of our queen Caroline's history deserves to be had in perpetual remembrance!

The same prelate speaking of king William, says, 'I considered him as a person raised up by God, to resist the power of France, and the progress of tyranny and persecution. The thirty years, from the year 1672 to his death, in which he acted so great a part, carry in them so many amazing steps of a glorious and distinguishing Providence, that in the words of David he may be called,—*The man of God's right hand, whom he made strong for himself.*'

* See M. Chevreau's character of the Princess Sophia, quoted by Addison. Freeholder, No. 30. See also her two letters to Bishop Burnet, in his life annexed *to his own times.*

* Burnet's own times, 1707.

But if there were just grounds for this remark respecting this particular period, and this individual personage: what shall we say of the entire chain of providences, which runs through our whole national history, from the landing of our Saxon ancestors to the present hour? May it not be confidently asked, Is there at this day a nation upon earth, whose circumstances appear so clearly to have been arranged, and bound together, by the hands of HIM, 'who does whatsoever he pleases, both in heaven and earth?'

That the purposes of this great scheme have, as yet been most inadequately answered, as far as our free agency is concerned, is a deep ground for our humiliation, but no argument against the reality of providential direction. The Sacred history of the Jews, the only people who have been more distinguished than ourselves, presents to us not only their unparalleled obligations to the Almighty, but also a series of such abuses of those mercies, as at length brought upon them a destruction as unexampled as their guilt. The great purposes of heaven cannot be frustrated; but the instrument which embarrassed the process may, too surely, be excluded from any share in the beneficial results, and be, on the contrary, the distinguished victim of indignation. Thus Judea, in spite of all its apostacies, was made subservient to its original object. In spite of the barrenness of the parent tree, the mystic branch was made to spring from its roots; but this purpose being once served, the tree itself, nourished as it had been with the chief fatness of the earth, and with the richest dews of heaven, was 'hewn down and cast into the fire.'

Let England, let those especially of rank and influence, and, above all, let the personage whose high, but most awful trust it may be to have the delegated oversight of this vineyard, which God has 'fenced and planted with the choicest vine;' let ALL feel the weight of their responsibility, and avert those judgments which divine justice may deem commensurate to our abused advantages!

We have been the object of admiration to the whole civilized world! Such have been the blessings conferred upon us, and such have been the bright lights, from time to time, raised up among us, that it could not be otherwise. But what would the effect have been, if our unexampled constitution, correspondent to its native design, had called forth, not the unblushing, because unpunishable, baseness of party profligacy, but the unfettered, disinterested, unanimous, exertion of commanding talent, of energetic application, and of invincible virtue! if a solicitude to digest the principles, to imbibe the spirit, and to exemplify the virtues of our illustrious worthies had been as assiduously excited by preceptors in their pupils, and by parents in their children, as a blind admiration of them, or a blinder vanity on account of them:—if those worthies had been as sedulously imitated, as they have been loudly extolled; and above all, if our national church establishment had been as universally influential, as it is intrinsically admirable in its impressive ordinances, its benignant spirit, and its liberal, yet unadulterated doctrines:—We mean not, if these effects had been produced to any improbable Utopian extent, but in that measure, which was, in the nature of things, possible, and which the moral Governor of the Universe had an equitable right to look for.—If this had been realized, who can say what evils might have been prevented, what good might have been accomplished? How might protestantism have spread through Europe, did our national morals keep pace with our profession? How happily might the sound philosophy of the English school, when thus illustrated, have precluded the impious principles and the blasphemous language of Voltaire and his licentious herd! And how would the widely diffused radiance of our then unclouded constitution have poured even upon surrounding countries so bright a day, as to have made rational liberty an object of general, but safe pursuit, and left no place for those works of darkness by which France has degraded herself, and outraged human nature!

Shall we then persevere in our inattention to the indications of Providence? Shall we persist in our neglect or abuse of the talents committed to us? Shall we be still unconscious that all our prosperity hangs suspended on the sole will of God, and that the moment of his ceasing to sustain us, will be the moment of our destruction? And shall not this be felt particularly by those who, by being placed highest in the community, would, in such a ruin, be the most signal victims, so they may now do most toward averting the calamity? On the whole, what is the almost audible language of heaven to prince and people, to nobles and commoners, to church and state, but that of the great Author of our religion in his awful message to the long since desolated churches of Asia? 'Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth; and I will kill thy children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works.'

CHAP. XL.

On Christianity as a principle of action, especially as it respects supreme rulers.

CHRISTIANITY is not an ingenious theory, a sublime but impracticable speculation, a fanciful invention to exercise the genius or sharpen the wit; but it is a system for common apprehension, for general use, and daily practice. It is critically adapted to the character of man, intelligible to his capacity, appropriated to his exigencies, and accommodated to his desires. It contains, indeed, abstruse mysteries to exercise his faith, to inure him to submission, to habituate him to dependence; but the sublimest of its doctrines involve deep practical consequences.

Revelation exhibits what neither the philosophy of the old, nor the natural religion of the modern sceptic, ever pretended to exhibit, a compact system of virtues and graces. Philosophy boasted only fair ideas, independent virtues, and disconnected duties. Christianity presents an

unmutilated *whole*, in which a few simple but momentous premises induce a chain of consequences commensurate with the immortal nature of man. It is a scheme which not only displays every duty, but displays it in its just limitation and relative dependence; maintaining a lovely symmetry and fair proportion, which arise from the beautiful connexion of one virtue with another, and of all virtues with that faith of which they are the fruits.

But the paramount excellence of Christianity is, that its effects are not limited, like the virtues of the Pagans, to the circumscribed sphere of this world. *Their* thoughts and desires, though they occasionally appeared, from their sublimity, to have been fitted, for a wider range, were in a great measure shut in by the dark and narrow bounds of the present scene. At most, they appear to have had but transient glimpses of evanescent light, which, however, while they lasted, made them often break out into short but spirited apostrophes of hope, and even triumph. The Stoics talked deeply and eloquently of self-denial, but never thought of extending, by its exercise, their happiness to perpetuity. Philosophy could never give to divine and eternal things, sufficient distinctness or magnitude to induce a renunciation of present enjoyment, or to insure to the conqueror, who should obtain a victory over this world, a crown of unfading glory. It never was explained, except in the page of Revelation, that God was himself an abundant recompence for every sacrifice which can be made for his sake. Still less was it ascertained, that, even in this life, God is to the good man his refuge and his strength, 'a very present help in time of trouble.' There is more rational consolation for both worlds, in these few words of the Amighty to Abraham, 'Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,' than in all the happy conjectures, and ingenious probabilities, of all the philosophers in the world.

The religion, therefore, which is in this little work meant to be inculcated, is not the gloomy austerity of the ascetic; it is not the fierce intolerance of the bigot, it is not the mere assent to historical evidence, nor the mere formal observances of the nominal Christian. It is not the extravagance of the fanatic, nor the exterminating zeal of the persecutor: though all these faint shadows, or distorting caricatures have been frequently exhibited as the genuine portraits of Christianity; by those who either never saw her face, or never came near enough to delineate her fairly, or who delighted to misrepresent and disfigure her.

True religion is, on the contrary, the most sober, most efficient, most natural, and therefore most happy exercise of right reason. It is, indeed, rationally made predominant by such an apprehension of what concerns us, in respect to our higher nature, as sets us above all undue attraction of earthly objects; and in a great measure, frees the mind from its bondage to the body. It is that inward moral liberty which gives a man the mastery over himself, and enables him to pursue those ends which his heart and his conscience approve, without yielding to any of those warping influences, by which all, except genuine Christians, must be, more or less, led captive. In a word, it is the influential knowledge of HIM, whom to know is wisdom—whom to fear is rectitude—whom to love is happiness. A principle this, so just in rational creatures to their infinite owner, benefactor, and end; so demanded by all that is perceivable in outward nature, so suggested by all that is right, and so required by all that is wrong in the human mind, that the common want of it, which almost every where presents itself, is only to be accounted for on the supposition of human nature being under some unnatural perversion, some deep delirium, or fatal intoxication; which by filling the mind with sickly dreams, renders it insensible to those facts and verities, of which awakened nature would have the most awful and most impressive perception.

Thus, to awaken our reason, to make us sensible of our infatuation, to point us to our true interest, duty, and happiness, and to fit us for the pursuit, by making us love both the objects at which we are to aim, and the path in which we are to move, are the grand purposes of the Christian dispensation. If moral rectitude be an evil; if inward self-enjoyment be a grievance, if a right estimate of all things be folly; if a cheerful and happy use of every thing, according to its just and proper value, be misery; if a supreme, undeviating attachment to every thing that is true and honest, and pure, and just, and lovely, and of good report, be weakness: in short, if the true relish for every thing substantially useful, every thing innocently pleasant in life, with the prospect, when life is ended, of felicity unspeakable and eternal, be moping melancholy, then, and not otherwise, ought the religion of the New Testament to be treated with neglect, or viewed with suspicion; as if it were hostile to human comfort, unsuitable to high station, or incompatible with any circumstances which right reason sanctions.

The gospel is, in infinite mercy, brought within the apprehension of the poor and the ignorant; but its grandeur, like that of the God who gave it, is not to be lowered by condescension. In its humblest similitudes, the discerning mind will feel a majestic simplicity, identical with that of created nature; and in its plainest lessons, an extent of meaning which spreads into infinitude. When we yield ourselves to its influences, its effects upon us are correspondent to its own nature. It lays the axe to the root of every kind of false greatness, but it leaves us in a more confirmed, and far happier enjoyment of all which really gives lustre to the character, which truly heightens the spirit, which strengthens, ennobles, and amplifies the mind. It announces to us a spiritual sovereign, to whose unseen dominion the proudest potentates of the earth are in unconscious, but most real subjection; but who, notwithstanding his infinite greatness, condescends to take up his residence in every human heart that truly yields to his influence; suppressing in it every unruly and unhappy passion; animating it with every holy and heavenly temper, every noble and generous virtue; fitting it for all the purposes of Providence, and fortifying it against calamities, by a peace 'which passeth all understanding.'

That this is a view of Christianity, founded

in irrefragable fact, and peculiarly demanding our regard, appears from the uniform language of its divine author, respecting himself and his mission, on all occasions where a summary announciation was fitting. It is a spiritual kingdom, on the eve of actual establishment, of which he gives notice. To this ultimate idea, the other great purposes of his incarnation are to be referred. They over whom he means to reign are attainted rebels. He, therefore, so fulfils every demand of that law which they had violated, as to reverse the attainder, on grounds of eternal justice. They were, also, captives to a usurper, whose mysterious power he has so broken as to disable him from detaining any who are cordially willing to break their bonds. And having thus removed all obstacles, he offers privileges of infinite benefit; and demands no submission; no dereliction, no observance, but what, in the very nature of things, are indispensable to the recovery of moral health, moral liberty, and moral happiness: and what He, by the gracious influences of his ever-present Spirit, will render, not only attainable, but delightful to the honest and humble heart.

The royal person, then, should early and constantly be habituated to consider herself as peculiarly under the government, and in a most especial manner needing the protection and guidance of this Almighty Sovereign; looking to his word for her best light, and to his Spirit for her best strength; performing all that she undertakes, in the manner most perfectly conformed to his laws, and most clearly subservient to the interests of his spiritual kingdom; submitting all events to his wisdom, and acknowledging no less his particular than his general Providence; and, above all, praying daily for his support, depending on his goodness for success, and submitting to his will in disappointment. In fact, to none, in so eminent a sense as to princes, does that sentiment of an inspired instructor belong: 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.'

She should practically understand, that religion, though it has its distinct and separate duties, yet it is not by any means a distinct and separate thing, so as to make up a duty of itself, disconnected with other duties, but that it is a grand, and universally governing principle, which is to be the fountain of her morality, and the living spring of all her actions: that religion is not merely a thing to be retained in the mind, as a dormant mass of inoperative opinions, but which is to be brought, by every individual, into the detail of every day's deeds: which, in a prince, is to influence his private behaviour, as well as his public conduct; which is to regulate his choice of ministers, and his adoption of measures; which is to govern his mind, in making war and making peace; which is to accompany him, not only to the closet, but to the council; which is to fill his mind, whether in the world or in retirement, with an abiding sense of the vast responsibility which he is under, and the awful account to which he will one day be called, before that Being, who lodges the welfare of so many millions in his hands. In fine, to borrow the words of the pious archbishop Secker, 'It ought to be explicitly taught, and much dwelt upon, that religion extends its authority to *every thing*: to the most worldly, the commonest, the lowest' (and surely, still more the highest earthly) 'things; binding us to behave reasonably, decently, humbly, honourably, meekly, and kindly in them all; and that its interfering so far, instead of being a hardship, is a great blessing to us, because it interferes always for our good.'

Parasites have treated some weak princes, as if they were not of the same common nature with those whom they govern; and as if, of course, they were not amenable to the same laws. Christianity, however, does not hold out two sorts of religion, one for the court, and one for the country; one for the prince, and another for the people. Princes, as well as subjects, who, 'by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality,' shall reap 'eternal life.' As there is the same code of laws, so there is the same promise annexed to the observance of them. 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' There are no exempt cases. The maxim is of universal application. There will be no pleading of privilege on that day, when the dead, SMALL and GREAT, shall stand before God; when they shall be 'judged out of those things which are written in the book of God's remembrance, according to their works.'

So far from a dispensation of indulgences being granted to princes, they are bound even to more circumspection. They are set on a pinnacle, the peculiar objects of attention and imitation. Their trust is of larger extent, and more momentous importance.—Their influence involves the conduct of multitudes. Their example should be even more correct, because it will be pleaded as a precedent. Their exalted station, therefore, instead of furnishing excuses for omission, does but enlarge the obligation of performance. They may avail themselves of the same helps to virtue, the same means for duty; and they have the same, may we not rather say, they have even a stronger assurance of divine aid, since that aid is promised to be proportioned to the exigence; and the exigencies of princes are obviously greater than those of any other class of men.

Power and splendor are not to be considered as substitutes for virtue, but as instruments for its promotion, and means for its embellishment. The power and splendor of sovereigns are confirmed to them by the laws of the state, for the wisest and most beneficial purposes. But these illustrious appendages are evidently not meant for their personal gratification, but to give impressiveness and dignity to their station; to be suitable and honourable means of supporting an authority, which Providence has made indispensable to the peace and happiness of society; and on the adequate energy of which, the security and comfort of all subordinate ranks, in their due gradations, so materially depend.

Can we hesitate to conclude, that at the last great audit, princes will be called to account, not only for all the wrong which they have done, but for all the right which they have neglected to do? Not only for all the evil they have per-

petrated, but for all that they, wilfully, have permitted? For all the corruptions which they have sanctioned, and all the good which they have discouraged? It will be demanded whether they have employed royal opulence, in setting an example of wise and generous beneficence, or of contagious levity and voluptuousness? Whether they have used their influence, in promoting objects clearly for the public good, or in accomplishing the selfish purposes of mercenary favourites? And whether, on the whole, their public and private conduct tended more to diffuse religious principle, and sanction Christian virtue, or to lend support to fashionable profligacy, and to undermine national morality?

At the same time it is to be remembered, that they will be judged by that *omniscient* Being, who sees the secret bent and hidden inclinations of the heart; and who knows that the best prince cannot accomplish all the good he wishes, nor prevent all the evil he disapproves:—by that *merciful* Being, who will recompense pure desires and upright intentions, even where providential obstacles prevented their being carried into execution—by that *compassionate* Being, who sees their difficulties, observes their trials, weighs their temptations, commiserates their dangers, and takes most exact cognizance of circumstances, of which no human judge can form an adequate idea. Assured, as we are, that this gracious method of reckoning will be extended to all, may we not be confident, that it will be peculiarly applied, where the case most expressly stands in need of it? And may we not rest persuaded, that if there is a spectacle which our Almighty Ruler beholds with peculiar complacency on earth, and will recompense with a crown of distinguished brightness in heaven, it is a SOVEREIGN DOING JUSTLY, LOVING MERCY, AND WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD. *

But is religion to be pursued by princes only as a guide of conduct, a law by which they are to live and act: as a principle which, if cultivated, will qualify them for eternal felicity? These are invaluable benefits, but they do not *wholly* express all that princes in particular need from religion.—*They*, in an eminent degree, require consolation and support for this life, as well as a title to happiness in the life to come. *They*, above all human beings, need some powerful resource to bear them up against the agitations and the pressures, to which their high station inevitably exposes them.

To whom on this earth are troubles and heartaches so sure to be multiplied, as to princes, especially to those of superior understanding and sensibility? Who, of any other rank are exposed to such embarrassing trials, such difficult dilemmas? We speak not merely of those unfortunate monarchs, who have undergone striking vicissitudes, or who have been visited with extraordinary calamities; but of such also whom the world would rather agree to call prosperous and happy:—Yet let him who doubts this general truth, read the accounts given by all our historians of the last years of king William, and the last months of queen Anne; and then let him pronounce what could be more trying, than those disappointments and disgusts which sunk into the very soul of the one, or those cares and agitations which finally destroyed the peace of the other.

If there be then any secret in the nature of things, and clearly infallible remedy by which such distresses may be assuaged, by which self-command, self-possession, and even self-enjoyment may be secured in the midst of the greatest trials to which mortality is liable,—would not this be an object to which the view of princes, even above all the rest of mankind, should be directed; and in comparison of which, they might justly hold cheap all the honours of their birth, and all the prerogatives of their rank?

Christian piety, when real in itself, and when thoroughly established in the heart and in the habits, *is* this secret. When the mind is not only conscientiously, but affectionately religious; when it not only fears God, as the Almighty Sovereign, but loves and confides in him, as the all-gracious Father, not merely inferred to be such, from the beauty and benignity apparent in the works of nature, but rationally understood to be such from the discoveries of divine grace in the word of God;—and let us add, no less rationally felt to be such, from the transforming influence of that word upon the heart: then, acts of devotion are no longer a penance, but a resource, and a refreshment; insomuch that the voluptuary would as soon relinquish those gratifications for which he lives, as the devout Christian would give up his daily intercourse with his Maker. But it is not in stated acts merely that such devotion lives,—it is an habitual sentiment which diffuses itself through the whole of life, purifying, exalting and tranquilizing every part of it, smoothing the most rugged paths,—making the yoke of duty easy, and the burden of care light. It is a perennial spring in the very centre of the heart, to which the wearied spirit betakes itself for refreshment and repose.

In this language there is no enthusiasm. It is in spite of the cold raillery of the sceptic, the language of truth and soberness.—The Scriptures ascribe to Christian piety this very efficacy; and every age and nation furnish countless instances of its power to raise the human mind to a holy heroism, superior to every trial! 'Were there not,' says the sober and dispassionate Tillotson, 'something *real* in the principles of religion, it is impossible that they should have so remarkable and so regular an effect, to support the mind in every condition, upon so great a number of persons, of different degrees of understanding, of all ranks and conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in so many distant places, and in all ages of the world, the records whereof have come down to us. I say so real, and so frequent, and so regular an effect as this, cannot with any colour of reason, be ascribed either to blind chance or mere imagination, but must have a real and regular, and uniform cause, proportionable to so great and general an effect.'*

We are persuaded that if the subject of this chapter be considered with an attention equal to its importance every other virtue will spring up, as it were spontaneously, in the mind, and a high degrees of excellence, both public and private,

* Sermon XI.

be instinctively pursued. In such a case, how happy would be the distinguished individual, and how inconceivably benefited and blessed would be the community!

Pious sovereigns are at all times, the richest boon which heaven can bestow on a country. The present period makes us more than ever sensible of their importance. A period in which law has lost its force, rank its distinction, and order its existence; in which ancient institutions are dissolving, and new powers, of undescribed character, and unheard of pretension, are involving Europe in contests and convulsions, of which no human foresight can anticipate the end. In what manner *we* may be affected by this unprecedented state of things, what perils *we* may have to face, what difficulties to struggle with, or what means of final extrication may be afforded us, it is not in man to determine. But certain it is, that even in the most threatening circumstances, the obvious, unaffected, consistent piety of the sovereign will do more to animate and unite a British public, than the eloquence of a Demosthenes, or the songs of a Tyrtæus; and it will be as sure a pledge of eventful success, as either the best disciplined armies or the most powerful navies. Who can say how much we are indebted for our safety hitherto to the blessing of a king and queen who have distinguished themselves above all the sovereigns of their day, by strictness of moral conduct and by reverence for religion? May their successors, to the latest posterity, improve upon, instead of swerving from their illustrious example

---

CHRISTIAN MORALS.

In moral actions, Divine law holdeth exceedingly the law of Reason to guide a man's life; but in supernatural it alone guideth.—*Hooker.*

As a slight memorial of sincere esteem and cordial friendship, this little sketch of

CHRISTIAN MORALS

Is, with strict propriety, Inscribed

TO THE REV. THOMAS GISBORNE,

Of Yoxall Lodge:

IN HIS WRITINGS AND IN HIS LIFE, A CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN MORALIST

PREFACE.

Mr. Pope, in his Essay on Criticism, has asserted, that the 'last and greatest art' of literary composition is 'the art to blot.' With a full conviction of the difficulty and the duty of this art, the Author of the following pages ventures to insist, even in contradiction to this high authority, that there is, in writing, an art still more rare, still more slowly learned, still more reluctantly adopted—*the art to stop.*

But when shall this difficult, but valuable, art be resorted to? At what precise moment shall we begin to reduce so wholesome a theory to practice? It may be answered—at the period when time may reasonably be suspected to have extinguished the small particle of fire which the fond conceit of the author might tempt him to fancy he once possessed.

But how is he to ascertain this critical moment of extinction? His own eyes, always dim in the discernment of his own faults, may have become quite blind. His friends are too timid, or too tender, to hazard the perilous intimation. If his enemies, always kindly ready to perform this neglected office of friendship, proclaim the unwelcome truth, they are probably not believed. The public, then, who are neither governed by the misleadings of affection, nor influenced by the hostility of hatred, would seem to be the proper arbiters, the court from whose decision there should lie no appeal.

But if, through generous partiality to good intentions, or habitual kindness to long acquaintance, that the public, instead of checking, continue to cherish, the efforts which they have been accustomed to indulge, and the author be tempted still to persist in writing, may he not be in imminent danger of wearing out the good humour of his protectors, by a successive reproduction of himself—of abusing their kindness, by the vapid exhibition of an exhausted intellect?

May the writer of the following pages, without incurring too heavily the imputation of vanity, be permitted to observe, that there is a sense in which the favour she has uniformly experienced is honourable to that public who have conferred it? Their indulgence has never been purchased

by flattery; their support has never been in payment for softening errors that require, not to be qualified, but combated; has never been a reward for incense offered to the passions, for sentiments accommodated to whatever appeared to be defective in any reigning opinion, in any prevailing practice. They have received with approbation unvarnished truth, and even borne with patience bold remonstrance. In return, she is willing to hope, that she has paid them a more substantial respect, by this hazardous sincerity, than if she had endeavoured to conciliate their regard by indirect arts and unworthy adulation.

Next to injure any reader, her deepest regret would be to offend him; but when the questions agitated are of momentous concern, would not disguising truth, or palliating error, be, as to the intention, the worst of injuries, however powerless the writer might be in making a bad intention effectively mischievous? Sincere, therefore, as would be her concern, if any stroke of her pen

Should tend to make one worthy man her foe,

yet the feeling of having contributed to mislead a single youthful mind, by the suppression of a right, or the establishment of a false principle, would be more painful than any censures which an imprudent honesty might draw down upon her.

If the humble work now presented to the world, be of little use to the reader, the writer is willing to hope it may not be altogether unprofitable to herself. If it induce her more strenuously to cultivate the habit of rendering speculation practical, if it should dispose her to adopt more cordially what she is so prompt to recommend, she will then have turned to some little account the hours of pain and suffering under which it has been composed.

She does not, however, absurdly presume to plead pain and suffering as an apology for defects in a work which she was at liberty not to have undertaken; for, with whatever other evils sickness may be chargeable, it imposes on no one the necessity of adding one more to the countless catalogue of indifferent books.

Barley Wood, December, 10th, 1812.

CHRISTIAN MORALS.

CHAP. I.

On the writers of pious books.

All the things in this world carry in them such evident marks of imperfection, are so liable to be infected with error, good is separated from evil by such slight partitions, and the deflection from what is right is so easy, that even undertakings which should seem most exempt from danger are yet insecure in their conduct, and uncertain in their issue. Writing a soundly-religious book might seem to put in the claim of an exempt case; but does experience prove that the exemption is infallible? The employment is good, the motive is likely to be pure; the work may be unexceptionable in its tendency, and useful in its consequences. But is it always beneficial to the writer in the proportion in which he intends it to be profitable to the reader? Even if the reader, is his own improvement always the leading aim? Does a critical spirit never diminish the benefit which the book was calculated to convey? If he is convinced by the more essential truths it imparts, is not some trivial disagreement of opinion, in a matter on which persons may differ without any charge against the piety of either, made to defeat all the ends of improvement! Is not an insignificant, perhaps an ill founded objection, suffered to invalidate the merit of the whole work! Is not this eagerly detected fault triumphantly kept in the fore-ground, while all that is valuable is overlooked and its efficacy defeated; the criticism being at once intended to give prominence to the error of the writer and the sagacity of the critic? Another reader is probably searching for brilliancy when he should be looking for truth, or he is only seeking a confirmation of his own opinions, when he should have been looking for their correction.

As to the writer, is he not in danger of being absorbed in the mechanical part of his work, till religious composition dwindles into a mere secular operation? May he not be diverted from his main object by an over-attention to elegance, to correctness, to ornament;—all which indeed are necessary; for if he would benefit he must be read, if he would be read he must please, if he would please he must endeavour to excel;—but may he not, in taking some, take too much pains to please, and so become less solicitous to benefit, to the injury both of his reader and himself? May not the very lopping and pruning his work, the flowers which he is anxiously sticking into it, the little decorations with which he is setting off those parts which he fears may be thought dry and dull, raise a sensation in his mind not unlike that which a vain beauty feels in tricking out her person? May he not, by too much confidence in his own powers, be blind to errors obvious to all but himself; or else may he not use the file too assiduously, and by over-labour in smoothing the asperities of his style, diminish the force of his meaning, and polish honest vigour into unprofitable elegance?

Some indeed have been so indulgent to authors under their many difficulties, as to allow them a certain mixture of inferior excitement, as an under help to assist such motives as are more pure. If they did not feel a little too full of their work, when it was under their hand, it has been said, they would not devote to it the full force of their mind. This anxiety, or rather this absorption, it is presumed, lasts no

longer than till the immediate object is accomplished. It retreats indeed, but waits for the author, seizes him again with undiminished force on his next undertaking. If he fancied that his former subject was all in all while his mind was intent upon it, that preference, like the fondness of an animal for its young, which is lost when they no longer need its fostering care, is transferred to the next.

As this ardour in a rightly-turned mind will not be sufficiently durable to ripen into vanity, but will cool as soon as the end for which it was exerted is answered; it will not materially injure the conscientious writer; for he will probably, when the impetus is taken off, as much undervalue his work, as he had before over-rated it. But woefully deficient in humility is that author, whose enthusiasm does not subside, when it is no longer necessary to keep alive the spirit of his undertaking! Convicted indeed will he be of vanity, who persists in thinking his work as glowing, as when, with a judgment dazzled by his ardour, he viewed it hot, and fresh-drawn from the furnace!

But perhaps when a man engages in any little service, if he did not in some degree exaggerate its value, in his hope of its utility, he would want one motive for attempting it. Is it not therefore a smaller evil that he should a little magnify its importance to his imagination, than that complete hopelessness should totally deter him from all enterprise? Natural indolence is in many, too powerful a subduer even of religious exertion, to allow them to work without hope. If hope flatters, she at least supports; thus something is achieved which else would not have been done at all. Again, the timid writer forsees that many objections may be raised to his work. This would amount to a disqualifying dejection, did he not take comfort in the chance that his censors may possibly disagree among themselves as to the points deserving criticism, and that one may even commend what another condemns. Thus his mind is kept in a just equilibrium; without the expectation of censure, he would be vain; without some hope of approbation, even the purity of his intention might not always secure him from despondency.

But though no mixed motives or human feelings in the author ought to interfere with those of the reader, who has only to do with the book, and not with the man, it is of no small moment to himself, that both feelings and motives be pure. It is of the last importance that he do not impose on himself the belief, that he has only the honour of religion at heart, when literary renown, or victory over an adversary, may be the predominating principle. He will also be careful that his best endowments be not converted into implements of injury; he will be cautious that his learning, which is so useful to arm his zeal, do not help to encumber it; that his prudence, which is so necessary to moderate, do not extinguish it.

But if he comes off clear from these temptations, other and greater lurk behind. He should bear in mind, that in composing a religious work for the public, he is producing the best part of himself: that he is probably exhibiting himself to others as much better than he is; for whatever be the faults of his own character, it is his bounden duty to conduct his reader to the highest approach to excellence. Independent of his general defects, he is at least carefully keeping out of sight every vain thought which may have stolen upon him while writing, every evil temper which may have assailed him, every temptation to indulge too ardent a wish that his book may procure praise for himself, as well as benefit to his readers. To flatter himself inordinately on this head, as well as in over-anticipating the great effects it will produce, is not, perhaps, the smallest of his dangers. That very self knowledge which he has perhaps been inculcating on others, would preserve him from an undue estimation both of himself and his book.

It was the sneer of a witty, but discouraging satyrist, that, 'To mend the world 's a vast design.' It is, indeed, a design from which the purity of his motive may not always secure the humility of the author. Yet modestly to aim at ameliorating that little portion of it which lies within his immediate sphere, is a duty out of which he should not be laughed by wits and epigramatists. Instead of indulging unfounded hopes of improbable effects, the Christian writer will be humbled at the mortifying reflection, what great and extensive evil the most insignificant bad men may effect, while so little comparative good can be accomplished by the best. But it is to be regretted, that even religion is no sure protection against the intrusion of vanity, that it does not always secure its possessor from overrating his own agency, from fondly calculating on the unknown benefits which, by his projected work, he is preparing for mankind. A pious Welch minister, many years ago, being about to publish a sermon, previously consulted the writer of these pages how many thousand copies he ought to print. He felt not a little shocked at her advising him to reduce his thousands to hundreds, scores she did not dare advise. As she had foreseen, not half a dozen were sold, except a few, charitably taken off his hands by his friends. At her return soon after, from the metropolis, he hastened to her with all the ardour of impatience, and seriously inquired, whether she had observed any material reformation at the court end of the town, since the publication of the discourse.

Among the many unsuspected but salutary checks to the vanity of a pious writer, it will not be the least, that his very popularity may make the intrinsic value of his work questionable; that he may be indebted for its favourable reception, not to its excellencies, but its defects, not to the deep, but to the superficial views he has taken of religion, that it may be more acceptable only because it is less searching; that if he has pleased, it may be owing to his having been more cautious than faithful. If there is reason to suspect that success arises from his having skimmed the surface of truth, when he ought to have penetrated its depths, that he has reconciled the reader to Christianity and to himself by a disingenious discretion, by trimming between God and the world, by concealing truths he ought to have brought forward, or by palliat-

ing those he durst not disavow: popularity thus obtained will afford ground of humiliation rather than of triumph. In avoiding these, and all similar errors, he will also not fail to bear in mind, that He who gave the talents, gave also the right bent to the use of them, and that, therefore, he has no more ground for boasting of the application than of the possession.

When he is called upon by the nature of his subject to expatiate strongly on this vice, or to point out the danger of that error, does he never feel a sort of conscious superiority to certain individuals of his acquaintance, who may be infected with either, and, for a moment, be tempted to sit rather in the seat of the scorner, than in that of the counsellor? On such occasions, there is nothing which he will more carefully watch, than the temper of his own mind. When duty compels him to be severe against any false opinion, or wrong practice, he will be cautious not to mix with his just censure, any feeling of disdain, any sentiment of indignation, against any individual whom he may bear in mind; nor will he indulge the unworthy wonder how such or such a person will be mortified at the exposure of a fault to which he is addicted. Nor will he harbour in his bosom an uncharitable vehemence against those whom the reproof may suit, nor a secret self-complacent certainty, that if *any thing* can do them good, this must do it; that though they hear not Moses and the Prophets, they cannot but listen to his pointed admonitions—that they can never stand out against such persuasions as he has to offer—never resist such arguments as he has prepared for their conviction.

But what is still a more serious danger, has he never been tempted to overlook his own faults while he has been exposed to those of others; and this, though the failing he is condemning, may be peculiarly his own? With just indignation against the offences he is reproving, has he never once forgotten to mingle tender compassion for the offender, remembering, that he himself is sinful dust and ashes; that he also stands in need of infinite mercy, and has been only rescued by that mercy from being on a level with the worst objects of his just disapprobation.

It would, notwithstanding, be the highest degree of unfairness, to prefer a charge of injustice, hypocrisy, or even inconsistency, against an author, because his life in some respects, falls short of the strictness of his writings. It is a disparity almost inseparable from this state of frail mortality. He may have fallen into errors, and yet deserve to have no heavier charge brought against him than he has brought against others. Infirmity of temper, inequality of mind, a heart though fearing to offend God, yet not sufficiently dead to the world;—these are the lingering effects of sin imperfectly subdued, in a heart which yet longs, prays, and labours for a complete deliverance from all its corruptions.

When a pious writer treats on any awful topic, he writes under a solemn conviction of its vast importance; he trembles at the idea of not being entirely faithful, of not being valiant for the truth, of not being honestly explicit, of not declaring the whole counsel of God. His own heart is deeply impressed with the dignity of his subject, and he deprecates the thought of shrinking from the boldest avowal of every truth, or of withholding the most powerful enforcement to the practice of every virtue. He is apprehensive lest, on the one hand, when he assails vice or error, he should appear to indulge a violent or vindictive spirit, and be magisterially lifting his fallible self into the chair of authority; lest his attack on the vice might be construed into uncharitableness to the man. On the other hand, he is fearful lest by being more forbearing he should be less upright; lest if he tried to soften he should deceive; lest, by indulging too much a spirit of conciliation, he should compromise truth for human favour.—Honest though imperfect, sincere though fallible, he endeavours to bring his principles, his faith, and his convictions, into full operation; he warmly declares what he cordially feels, and faithfully testifies what he firmly believes.

But when he comes to act, he is sometimes brought to be too keenly sensible of the very fault in himself, against which he has been cautioning others; deeply does he lament that he feels strong remains in himself of that corruption of which it was not the less his duty to direct his attacks. Some temptation presses him, some infirmity cleaves to him. These unsubdued frailties prove that he is a man, but they do not prove that he is a hypocrite. The truth is, the religious writer is sometimes thought worse than other men, because his book was considered as a pledge that he should be better. It was expected that the faults he described he would avoid; the passions he had blamed he would suppress; the tempers he had exposed he would have subdued. Perhaps it will commonly be found that the reader had expected too much and the writer had done too little.

The writer on religious topics is however the person who of all others ought to watch himself most narrowly. He has given a public pledge of his principles. He has held out a rule, to which, as others will be looking with a critical eye to discover how far his conduct falls short of it, so he should himself constantly bear in mind the elevation of his own standard; and he will be more circumspect from the persuasion, that not only his own character but that of religion itself will suffer by his departure from it. The consciousness of the inferiority of his practice to his principles, if those principles are truly scriptural, will furnish him with new motives to humility. The solemn dread lest this inconsistency should be produced against him at the last day, is a fresh incentive to higher exertions, stirs him up to augmented vigilance, quickens him to more intense prayer. He experiences at once the contradictory feeling of dreading to appear better than he really is, by the high tone of piety in his compositions, or of making others worse by lowering that tone in order to bring his professions nearer to the level of his life. Perhaps the most humiliating moment he can ever experience is, when by an accidental glance at some former work he is reminded how little he himself has profited by the very arguments with which he may have successfully combated some error of the reader; when he feels how

much his own heart is still under the dominion of that wrong temper of which he has forcibly exposed the turpitude to the conviction of others.

There is, however, no personal reason which could ever justify his holding out an inferior standard. If there is any point in which he eminently excels, he has the best of all possible reasons for pressing it upon others—his own experience of its excellence. If there be any in which he unhappily fails, he is clearly justified in recommending it from the humbling sense of his own deficiency in it. Thus he will in either case enforce truth with equal energy, from causes diametrically opposite. Is it not then obvious that as there is no vanity in insisting on a virtue because the writer possesses it, so there is no hypocrisy in recommending a quality because he himself is destitute of it?

But if, through the so frequently alleged imperfection attached to humanity, christian writers do not always attain to the excellence they suggest, let us not therefore infer that their principles are defective, their aims low, or their practical attainments mean. Let us not suspect that it is not the endeavour of their life, as much as the desire of their heart, to maintain a conduct which shall not discredit their profession. Above all, let us be cautious of concluding that they do not believe what they teach, because they have passions like other men; provided we observe them struggling with those passions, and making a progress in their conquest over them, though that progress be impeded by natural infirmity, though it be obstructed by occasional irritation. The triumphant detector of the discordance between the author and his book knows not the secret regrets, hears not the fervent prayers, witnesses not the penitential sorrows, which a deep sense of this disagreement produces in the self-abasing heart. To instance in a familiar case:—In the heat of conversation with the author, he has probably marked an impatient word, a hasty expression, a rash judgment; these he treasures up, and produces against him; but he does not hear, in the writer's nightly review of the errors of that day, his self rebuke for this unsubdued impetuosity, his resolutions against it, the earnest prayer which perhaps at this moment is carrying forward the gradual subjugation of his temper.

Yet his reputation might suffer in another way; for if the critic could hear these humbling confessions of the writers in question, he would be ready to conclude that they were 'Sinners above all the Galileans.' Whereas the truth most probably is, that they are so alive to the perception of the evil of their own hearts, that things which would be slight faults in the estimation of the accuser, to them appear grave offences. Things which they lament as evils of magnitude, would to the less tender conscience be impalpable, imperceptible. For instance,—While the caviller would call even the omission of prayer a venial fault; *they* would call a heartless prayer a sin; where the one would think all was well if the literal performance had not been neglected, the other would be uneasy under the exterior observance, if he felt that the spirit had not accompanied the form. The reprover might even accuse the serious Christian of absurdity, should he have overheard him humbling himself for something which was obviously a virtue. He was not, however, so preposterously humble, as to make the virtue the ground of his regret—he was abasing himself for some vanity, which like an excrescence had grown out of it, some inattention which like a poison had mixed with it. When a humble man meditates on his vices, and an irreligious man on his virtues, the vices of the one might be sometimes deemed as unsubstantial as the virtues of the other actually are.

The writer of good books, in common with other authors, is exposed to one danger from which other men are exempt, that of being so immediately the object of his own attention. This may lead him to be too full of himself. His intellect is even more constantly before his eyes than the form and face of the beauty are before her's. But if in this exercise he may be tempted to think too well of his understanding, the mischief will be counteracted by the advantage which such a close view may bring to his heart. The faults he reprehends in general, will bring his own faults more forcibly before him, and it will be a humbling consideration which he will not fail to press home on himself, to reflect, that he is better able to penetrate into the recesses of the erring hearts of others, from the sympathies of his own. Repeated and successful pains have been taken by some popular wits,* in whom levity has answered the end of malice, to lower the value of pious instruction, by exposing the discrepancy between the exhortation and the exhorter. They have ingeniously invented cases and situations in which the clergyman is preaching powerfully and efficaciously on the duty of submission to the divine will; immediately after which, they contrive to betray him into a paroxysm of overwhelming impatience at some great domestic calamity of his own. This as it tends to make the infirmity of sincere Christians a matter of triumph, could only have been done with a view to make them ridiculous; a laugh is cheaply though not very honourably raised, and the insignificance or hollowness of religious instruction perhaps indelibly stamped on the mind of the young reader. But supposing the circumstances to have been real, ought the frail affections, ought the conscious infirmity of these good men to have let them to withhold from their audiences the necessity of christian resignation? Such instances of natural feeling in certain stages of a progressive piety, neither prove religion to be powerless, nor its professor deceitful. Was the fervent, but fallible apostle, who in a moment of infirmity denied his master, a hypocrite, when he said, 'though all the world should be offended, yet will not I?'

Yet is this captious spirit an additional reason why the pious writer should guard against excesses in feeling, which, if the reader could witness, he would exultingly reiterate the vulgar but melancholy truism: *How much easier it is to preach than to practice!* How gladly would he have brought the conduct to confront the counsel, and have missed all the benefit of the discourse, by the disclosure of the failing!

* Goldsmith, Fielding, &c. &c.

But allowing the worst—granting that the writer is not in all points exemplary; if we resolve never to read a work of instruction because the author had faults, Lord Bacon's inexhaustible mind of intellectual wealth might have still lain unexplored. Luther, the man to whom the protestant world owes more than to any other uninspired being, might remain unread, because he is said to have wanted the meekness of Melancthon. Even the divine instructions conveyed in the book of Ecclesiastes would have been written in vain.

It is not necessary that the writer under consideration should, like the sacred penman, criminate himself. Their ingenuous self-abasement added weight to the truth of their general testimony, and was doubtless directed by the holy Spirit, as well for this purpose, as for the humiliation of the offending historian. But above all it is calculated to show that the renovation of hearts so imperfect was the work of the Spirit of God.

Though the pious writer in these days is not called upon to exercise this self-disparaging egotism, yet let not his silence on this head be attributed to a desire that he may be thought a better man than Moses, who heroically perpetuated the memory of that offence which was an inhibition to his entering the land of promise—nor than David, the recorder of his own sins, the enormity of which could only be exceeded by the intensity of his repentance—nor than saint Paul, who published himself to have been a blasphemer and a persecutor. If the best men among us have, through the preventing grace of God, been preserved from the signal offences of prophets and apostles, they will themselves be the foremost to acknowledge how, beyond all comparison, they are below them, in that devotedness of spirit, that contempt of earthly things, and that annihilation of self, which so eminently characterized those inspired servants of God.

But suppose we were to go farther—even if it could be proved that some individual charge had *not* been altogether unfounded. Even this possible evil in the man, would not invalidate the truths he has been teaching. Balaam, though a bad man, prophesied truly. Erasmus, whose piety is almost as doubtless, as his wit and learning were unquestionable, yet by throwing both into the right scale, was a valuable instrument in effecting the great work in which he was concerned. Erasmus powerfully assisted the reformation, though it is not quite so clear that the reformation essentially benefited Erasmus.

If then the writer advances unanswerable arguments in the cause of truth, if he impressively enforces its practical importance, his character, even if defective, should not invalidate his reasoning. Though we allow that even to the reader it is far more satisfactory when the life illustrates the writing, yet we must never bring the conduct of the man as any infallible test of the truth of this doctrine. Allow this, and the reverse of the proposition will be pleaded against us. Take the opposite case. Do we ever produce certain moral qualities which Hobbes, Bayle, Hume, and other sober sceptics possessed, as arguments for adopting their opinions?—Do we infer as a necessary consequence, that their sentiments are sound, because their lives were not flagitious?

But though it is an awful possibility, that the same work may at once promote God's glory, and prove a danger to the instrument that promotes it—that the opulence of the very mind which is advancing religion, may be used by the owner to his hurt—that he may be so absorbed in it as a business, that he may lose sight of his end—that he may neglect personal, while he is advancing public religion—or be so anxious for the success of his work, that he cannot commit the event to heaven: let us thankfully profit by the truths he teaches: bless God that he has been useful to us; and pray that his errors may not be imputed to him.

Many a sincere Christian will confess that when he is writing in an animated strain in the cause of religion, there are moments in which, from imbecility of mind or infirmity of body, or failure of animal spirits, while he is promoting the spiritual interests of others, he is inwardly lamenting his own deadness to the very things on which he is insisting. He however perseveres; like the army of Gideon, 'faint yet pursuing,' he suffers not the feeling to obstruct the act, till, as a reward for his perseverance, the act brings back the feeling. Were it suspected that some of his most approved pages were written under this declension of zeal, what a clamour would be raised against his inconsistency, when his merit—if we dare use the word merit—consists in overcoming the languor of his spirit, and in acting as if he felt it not. His depression may in fact have been augmented by his humility. He has trembled lest the solemnity with which he has been calling upon others, should not stir up his own feelings; lest the arguments which were intended to alarm the reader, should leave his own heart cold and unaffected.

While it is of the nature of scientific principles to adapt themselves only to one particular bent of mind, and of the inventive powers to address persons of imagination only: it is the character of Christianity, and should be the aim of the Christian writer, to accommodate their instructions to every class of society, to every degree of intellect, to every quality of mind, to every cast of temper. Christianity does not interfere with any particular form of study, any political propensity, any professional engagement, any legitimate pursuit. It claims to incorporate itself with the ideas of every intelligent mind which lies open to receive it; it infuses itself, when not repelled, into the character of every individual, as it originally assimilated itself to that of every government, without sacrificing any thing of its specific quality, without requiring any mind of a peculiar make for its reception.

Without altering its properties by any infusions of his own, a judicious writer will always consider how he may render it most acceptable to the capacity of the general recipient. To exclude reason from religion, he knows is not the way to attract argumentative men to inquire into its truth;—to exclude elegance from its exhibition, is not the probable method to invite

men of taste to speculate on its beauty. If however the writer possess little of the graces which embellish truth, if he cannot adorn it with those charms which, though they add nothing to its lustre, yet attract to its contemplation; still plain sense and unaffected piety may contribute to the production of a work which may prove useful to a large and valuable proportion of readers. But here if genius is not essential, good taste is never to be dispensed with. A sound judgment will be requisite to prevent piety from being repulsive to readers who have been accustomed to view other intellectual subjects exhibited in all the properties of which they are severally susceptible. Let them not see a subject of this transcendent importance, injured by any debasing mixture, disfigured by any coarseness of language, nor degraded by any vulgar associations.

On the other hand, while some object so strenuously against the introduction of the affections into religion, what are we to understand from it, but that in the opinion of the objectors, a man will write the better because he does not feel his subject,—that he will teach religion more safely to others, from not having felt its influence on his own heart,—that he will make a deeper impression by writing from books than from himself, or rather that making an impression at all is a dangerous thing,—that it is of the nature of enthusiasm, proceeding from it, and productive of it!—that therefore it is better that the reader should not be impressed, but only informed.

But the sound and sober Christian takes the best precaution against infusing a fanatical spirit by not possessing it. He cannot communicate the distemper of which he is not sick. He cautiously avoids it on a double ground. He knows that enthusiasm and superstition are not only mischievous in their nature, but that they furnish the profane with a plausible argument against religion itself. He remembers, and applies the observation, that to some pagan poets, especially Lucretius, these errors supplied Atheism with her most powerful arms. But though he allows that enthusiasm is dangerous, he continues to write like one who knows that it is not the exclusive danger of the age; like one who is convinced that frenzy is not the only distemper in our spiritual bills of mortality: like one whose heart is warmed, not by animal pulsation, but by those quickening oracles of truth, which carry in them 'the demonstration of the Spirit and of power;' like one who feels that religion is not a misleading fire, but an animating principle which at once enlarges his views, elevates his aims, and ennobles his character.

But to return to the reader. If we had no higher reason to aim at improvement in piety, one would almost think that the mere feelings of gratitude and good-nature might tempt to show our affection to our pious benefactors, by profiting from their exhortations, their councils, their persuasions. It might almost touch a heart dead to superior considerations, to reflect how many departed worthies have wasted their strength, as to us, in vain. Among the witnesses who will appear against us in the great day of account, *they* will stand the foremost. Let us tremble as we figure to ourselves our unwilling accusers in that band of holy men, who earnestly sought to draw us, not to themselves, but to those treasures of inspiration, of which they were the faithful expositors; to the Prophets and Apostles,—'to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to God the judge of all.'

And is it not a cruel return to refuse those who still meekly wait the effect of their labours upon earth, the honest gratification of seeing that we have derived some little advantage from their exertions? Let us show them that they have not offered up the fervent prayers which doubtless accompanied their unwearied labours to no end. While so many saints are now rejoicing in heaven, in the society of those whom their holy labours were made instrumental in bringing thither; let us not give those who are still zealously devoting their talents to the same glorious purpose upon earth, sad cause to lament the total inefficacy of their endeavours—to regret that they are sent to them who will not hear, or who remain as if they had not heard—to suspect that if we do give them a patient hearing, it is for the sake of their style, their rhetoric, their good taste; but that when their eloquence opposes our corruptions, when their arguments cross our inclinations, when their persuasions trench upon our passions, or their remonstrances interfere with our vanity, we are insensible to the voice of the charmer; or if we forgive their piety for the sake of their talents, we seldom go further than forgiveness.

— —

CHAP. II.

On Providence.

It is not easy to conceive a more deplorable state of mind, than to live in a disbelief of God's providential government of the world. To be threatened with troubles, and to see no power which can avert them; to be surrounded with sorrows, and discern no hand which can redress them; to labour under oppression or calumny, and believe there is no friend to relieve, and no judge to vindicate us; to live in a world, of which we believe its ruler has abdicated the throne, or delegated the direction to chance; to suspect that he has made over the triumph to injustice, and the victory to impiety; to suppose that we are abandoned to the casualties of nature, and the domination of wickedness; to behold the earth a scene of disorder, with no superintendent to regulate it; to hear the storms beating, and see the tempests spreading desolation around, with no influence to direct, and no wisdom to control them: all this would render human life a burden intolerable to human feeling. Even a heathen, in one of those glimpses of illumination which they seemed occasionally to catch, could say, *it would not be worth while to live in a world which was not governed by Providence.*

But, as soon as we clearly discern the mind which appoints, and the hand which governs, all events, we begin to see our way through

them: as soon as we are brought to recognize God's authority, and to confide in his goodness, we can say to our unruly hearts, what he said to the tempestuous waves, *Peace, be still.* Though all is perplexity, we know who can reduce confusion into order: once assured of the protection of the Supreme Intelligence, we shall possess our souls in patience, and resign our will with submission. As soon as this conviction is fully established, we become persuaded that a being of infinite love would never have placed us in a scene beset with so many trials, and exposed to so many dangers, had he not intended them as necessary materials by which, under his guidance, we are to work out our future happiness;—as so many warnings not to set up our rest here;—as so many incentives to draw us on in pursuit of that better state to which eternal mercy is conducting us through this thorny way.

To keep God habitually in view, as the end of all our aims, and the disposer of all events—to see him in all our comforts, to admire the benignity with which he imparts them—to adore the same substantial, though less obvious mercy, in our afflictions—to acknowledge at once the unwillingness with which he dispenses our trials, and the necessity of our suffering them—to view him in his bounties of creation, with a love which makes every creature pleasant—to regard him in his providential direction with a confidence which makes every hardship supportable—to observe the subserviency of events to his eternal purposes: all this solves difficulties otherwise insuperable, vindicates the divine conduct, composes the intractable passions, settles the wavering faith, and quickens the too reluctant gratitude.

The fabled charioteer, who usurped his father's empire for a day, is not more illustrative of *their* presumption, who, virtually snatching the reins of government from God, would involve the earth in confusion and ruin, than the denial which the ambitious supplicant received to his mad request, is applicable to the goodness of God in refusing to delegate his power to his creatures: *My son, the very tenderness I show in denying so ruinous a petition, is the purest proof that I am indeed thy father.*

Sounds to which we are accustomed, we fancy have a definite sense. But we often fancy it unjustly; for familiarity alone cannot give meaning to what is in itself unintelligible. Thus many words, without any determinate and precise meaning, pass current in common discourse. Some talk of those chimerical beings, nature, fate, chance, and necessity, as positively as if they had a real existence, and of almighty power and direction as if they had none.

In speaking of ordinary events as fortuitous, or as natural, we dispossess Providence of one half of his dominion. We assign to him the credit of great and avowedly supernatural operations, because we know not how else to dispose of them. For instance: We ascribe to him power and wisdom in the creation of the world, while we talk as if we thought the keeping it in order might be effected by an inferior agency. We sometimes speak as if we assigned the government of the world to two distinct beings: whatever is awful only, and out of the common course, we ascribe to God, as revolutions, volcanoes, earthquakes. We think the dial of Ahaz going backward, the sun stationary on Gibeon, marvels worthy of Omnipotence: but when we stop here, it is not virtually saying, that to maintain invariable order, unbroken regularity, perpetual uniformity, and systematic beauty in the heavens and the earth, does not exhibit equally striking proofs of infinite superintendence.

Many seem to ascribe to chance the common circumstances of life, as if they thought it would be an affront to the Almighty to refer them to him; as if it were unbecoming his dignity to order the affairs of beings whom he thought it no derogation of that dignity to create. It looks as if, while we were obliged to him for making us, we would not wish to encumber him with the care of us. But the gracious Father of the universal family thinks it no dishonour to watch over the concerns, to supply the wants, and dispose the lot of creatures who owe their existence to his power, and their redemption to his mercy. He did not create his rational subjects in order to neglect them, or to turn them over to another, a capricious, an imaginary power.

We do not it is true, so much arraign his general providence, as his particular appointments. We will allow the world to be nominally his, if he will allow us our opinion in respect to his management of certain parts of it. Now, that he should not put forth the same specific energy individually to direct as to create, is supposing an anomaly in the character of the all-perfect God.—Whatever was his design in the formation of the world and its inhabitants, the same reason would beyond a doubt, influence him in their superintendence and preservation.—David, in describing the simple grandeur of omnipotent benignity, sets us a beautiful pattern. He does not represent the belief of God's providential care as an effort, but describes our continual sustenance as the necessary unlaboured effect of infinite power and goodness. *He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness;* thus making our blessings rather, as it were, a result than an operation.

And as we are not under the divided control of a greater and a subordinate power, so neither are we, as the Persian mythology teaches, the subjects of two equal beings, each of whom distributes respectively good and evil according to his peculiar character and province. Nor are we the sport of the conflicting atoms of one school, nor of the fatal necessity of another. There is one omnipotent, omniscient, perfect, supreme Intelligence, who disposes of every person and of every thing according to the counsel of his own infinitely holy will. 'The help that is done upon earth, God doth it himself.' The comprehensive mind, enlightened by Christian faith, discovers the same harmony and design in the course of human events, as the philosopher perceives in the movements of the material system.

Without a thorough conviction of this most consolatory doctrine, what can we make of the events which are now passing before our eyes? What can we say to the perplexed state of an

almost desolated world? There is no way of disentangling the confusion but by seeing God in every thing. Not to adore his providence as having some grand scheme which he is carrying on, some remote beneficial end in view, some unrevealed design to accomplish, by means not only inscrutable, but seemingly contradictory, is practical atheism. To contemplate the events which distract the civilized world, the tyranny which tears up order and morality by the roots; to behold the calamities of some, the crimes of others—such blackness gathering over the heads of some countries, such tempests bursting over those of others—these scenes must subvert the faith, must extinguish the hope, of all who do not firmly believe that the same power which 'stilleth the raging of the sea and the noise of the waves,' can in his own good time also still *the madness of the people;* will in his appointed season enable us to say, 'And where is the fury of the oppressor?' He may, and we know not how soon, enable us to ask, 'Where is the man that made the earth to tremble—that did shake kingdoms—that made the world a wilderness that destroyed the cities thereof—that opened not the house of his prisoners?' Yes—disorganized as the state of the world appears to be, let us be assured that it is not turned adrift, that things are not left to go on at random. Though the people are rebellious, the Sovereign has not renounced his dominion over them. The most oppressive and destructive agents are his mysterious ministers: they are carrying on, though unconsciously, his universal plan—a plan, which though complicated is consistent; though apparently disorderly will be found finally harmonious.

In some pieces of mechanism we have observed different artists employed in different branches of the same machinery; in this division of labour, each man performs his allotted portion, in utter ignorance perhaps, not only of the portions assigned to the others, but also of the ultimate application of his own. Busy in executing his single pin, or spring, or wheel, it is no part of his concern to understand the work assigned to others, still less to comprehend the scheme of the master. But though the workman is ignorant how the whole is to be arranged, the machine would have been incomplete without his seemingly inconsiderable contribution. In the mean time, the master unites, by apt junctures and articulations, parts which were not known to be susceptible of connexion; combines the separate divisions without difficulty, because the several workmen have only been individually helping to accomplish the original plan which had previously existed in his inventive mind.

The prescience of God is among his peculiarly incommunicable attributes. Happy is it for us indeed that it *is* as incommunicable, for if any portion of it were imparted to us, how inconceivably would the distress of human life be aggravated! But if we allow his omniscience, we cannot doubt his Providence. He would not foresee contingencies, for which he could not provide. His attributes are in fact so interwoven that it is impossible to separate them. His omniscience foresees, his understanding, which is infinite, arranges, his sovereignty decrees, his omnipotence executes the purposes of his will.—His wisdom may see some things to be best for a while to answer certain temporary purposes, which would not be good for a continuance. When the present appointment shall have answered the end to which it was determined, a new one, to which that was preparatory, takes place. The two arrangements may appear to us not to be of a piece, to be even contradictory; while yet this determination and this succession are perfectly consistent in the mind of a being who sees all things at once, and calls things that are not as though they were. God's views of all men and all events throughout all ages, is one clear, distinct, simultaneous view. Infinite knowledge takes in present, past, and future, in one comprehensive survey, pierces through all distance at a glance, and collects all ages into the focus of the existing moment.

Once thoroughly grounded and established in this faith and sense of the divine perfections, we shall never look upon any thing to be so monstrous or so minute, so insignificant or so exhorbitant, as to be out of the precincts and control of eternal Providence. We shall never reduce, if the allusion be forgiven, the powers of omnipotence to a level with that of some Indian rajah who has a territory too unwieldy for his management, or of an emperor of China who has more subjects than one monarch can govern.

We ask why evil rulers are permitted?—We answer, though rather mechanically, our own question, by acknowledging that they are the appointed scourges of divine displeasure. Yet God does not delegate his *authority* to the oppressor, though he employs him as his instrument of correction; he still keeps the reins in his own hand. And besides that an offending world stood in need of the chastisement, these black instruments who are thus allowed to ravage the earth, may be, in the scheme of Providence, unintentionally preparing the elements of moral beauty. When divine displeasure has made barren a fruitful land 'for the wickedness of them that dwell therein,' the ploughshare and the harrow, which are sent to tear up the unproductive soil, know not that they are providing for the hand of the sower, who is following their rude traces in order to scatter the seeds of future riches and fertility.

Or take the conflagration of a town.—They whose houses are burnt, are objects of our tenderest commiseration. The scene, if we beheld it, would alike excite our terror and our pity. But, after we have mourned over the devastation, and seen that despair is fruitless, at length necessity impels to industry; we see a new and fairer order of things arise; the convenience, symmetry, and beauty which spring out of the ashes make us eventually not only cease to regret the deformity and unsightliness to which they have succeeded, but almost reconcile us to the calamity which has led to the improvement.

Often have the earthquake, the hurricane, the bolt of heaven, kindling and throwing far and wide its baleful light on this earthly stage, realized in their ultimate effects this image. And we are reminded of a future general conflagration, 'when the elements shall melt with fervent

heat, and the earth itself shall be burned up,' which is to prove only the signal and the preparatory scene for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let us, in every stage leading to this final 'restitution of all things,' wait with patience for its sure completion. Let us, in the mean time, give credit to the great Author of the book of Fate for the consistency of its catastrophe!

When we peruse the compositions of a human author, we look for unity and consistency in his whole plan; we expect connexion and relation between its several parts, and an entireness in the general combination. We are not so much delighted with a fine passage incidentally introduced, a short episode, of which we discern at once the rise and the end, and take in all the incidents and beauties at a single glance, as we are with the judgment which discovers itself in the distribution of the whole work, and the skill, not without difficulty discerned, which arranges, connects, and, as it were, links together the several divisions. Yet do we not sometimes presume to insinuate as if the great Author of all created nature cannot reduce the complexity of its parts into one consistent whole? Do we not intimate objections as if there were no concert, no agreement in the works of the Almighty mind? Do not the same persons who can speak in raptures of a perfect poem, a perfect scheme of reasoning, a perfect plan in architecture, yet presume to suspect that the concerns of the universe are carried on with less system, and on a more imperfect design, than the rude sketches of a frail creature, who is crushed before the moth?

But if we go so far as to leave to God the direction of the natural world, because we know not well, after all, to whom else to commit its management, yet we frequently make little scruple to take the government of the moral world into our own hands. If we consent to his ruling matter, we reluctantly allow that he governs mind. We reason as if we suspected that the passions of men lay beyond his controul, and that their vices have overturned his dominion. But we should particularly call to mind what is the daily language of our lips, not only that *His* is 'the kingdom,' but that the 'power' is the source, and 'the glory' the result of his administration. He does not, it is true, by an arbitrary compulsion of men's minds, rob them of that freedom by which they offend him, nor by a force on their liberty, prevent those sins and follies which, if he arbitrarily hindered, he would convert rational beings into mechanical ones; but he turns their sins and follies to such uses, that while by the voluntary commission of them they are bringing down destruction on their own heads, they are not impeding his purposes.

Nor does Providence, in his wide arrangements, exclude the operation of subordinate causes and motives, but allows them to assist the greater, and thereby to work his will; as subalterns in the battle contribute severally their share to the victory, while, like those inferior causes, they are compelled to keep their ranks, and not to aspire to the command. As we have a higher end, we must have a Supreme direction to our aims. Yet a lower end is sometimes made a means to a higher, and assists its object without usurping its place. Some who begin by abstaining from evil, or set about doing good from a principle not entirely pure, are graciously led to the principle by doing or forbearing the action; and are finally landed at the higher point, from beginnings far below those at which *we* might rashly have asserted they could only set out with any hope of success.

Though this may not very frequently occur, yet as it is by means God works, rather than by miracles; and as the world does not overflow with real piety, what a chaos would this earth become, if God did not permit inferior motives to operate to a certain degree for the general good! Many whom the utmost stretch of charity cannot induce us to believe that they are acting from the purest principles, are yet contributing to the comfort and good order of society. Though they are sober only from a regard to their health, yet their temperance affords a good example; though they are prudent from no higher motive than the love of money, yet their frugality keeps them within the same bounds as if they were influenced by a better motive; though they may be liberal only to raise their reputation, yet their liberality feeds the hungry; though they are public-spirited merely from ambition, yet their patriotism, by rousing the spirit of the country, saves it. If such right actions, performed from such low motives, can look for no future retribution;—if, being done without reference to the highest end, they do not advance the eternal interests of the doer, nor the glory of God, they are yet his instruments for promoting the good of others, both by utility and example. On this ground we may be thankful that there is so much refinement, generosity, and politeness among the higher orders of society, while we confess that tear away the action from its motive, sunder their virtue from its legitimate reference, the act and the virtue lose their present character and their ultimate reward.

The means by which an infinitely wise God often promotes the most important plans, are apt illustrations of the blindness and obliquity of man's judgment. May we be allowed to offer an instance or two, in which human wisdom would probably have taken a course, in the appointment of instruments and events, directly opposite to that pursued by infinite wisdom? What earthly judge, if he had been questioned as to means likely to produce one of the strongest evidences of the truth of Christianity to unbelievers, but would have named an agreement between Jews and Christians, as its fullest corroboration? If we ourselves had an important cause depending—for instance, the ascertaining our right to a litigated estate;—If the success of the trial depended on the testimony of the witnesses, and on the authenticity of our titled deeds, whose testimony should we endeavour to obtain; into whose hands should we wish ourselves to be committed? According to all human prudence should we not desire witnesses who had no known hostility to us; should we not object to a jury of avowed enemies; and should we not refuse to lodge our records in the hands of our opponents?

But His wisdom, in whose sight ours is folly,

has seen fit to make one of the most striking proofs of the truth of Christianity depend on the living miracle of the enmity of the Jews; 'to them also were committed the oracles of God,' so that to both their ancient testimony and their present opposition we are to look for the most striking proofs of a religion they hold with perpetual hatred. And now that Christianity is actually made to stand upon such evidence, what test can be more satisfactory? Reason itself owns its validity; for what collusion can now be charged upon the concurrent witnesses of Christianity, when each party in court is decidedly at variance with the other? Who can rationally question the strength of that title which is contained in their genuine archives—that evidence resulting from their hereditary denial of facts, of which they persist to reverence the predictions? Where can we more confidently look for the truth of a religion they detest, than to the verifications conferred on it by their original history, their irreversible antipathy their actual condition, and existing character?

To venture another specimen. If *we* had presumed to point out instruments for the destruction of Jerusalem, we should probably have thought none so appropriate as Constantine; we might have supposed the first christian emperor would have been the fittest avenger of the Redeemer's blood. Omniscience selected for the awful retribution a pagan prince, a virtuous one it is true, but one who seems to have no personal interest in the business, one to whom Jews and Christians, as such, were alike indifferent. While this utter desolation was the obvious accomplishment of a prophecy, which was to be a lasting evidence of the truth of our religion, the choice of the destroyer was one of those 'secret things which belong to God,' and is only to be alleged as a proof that 'his ways are not our ways.'

We will advert to another event, the most important since the incarnation of him whose pure worship it has restored—the reformation. This occurrence is a peculiarly striking instance of our ignorance of the operations of supreme wisdom, and of the means which, to our short sight, seem fit or unfit for the accomplishment of his purposes. If ever the hand of providence was conspicuous as the meredian sun, it was so in this mighty work—it was so in the selection of apparently discordant instruments—it was so, in over-ruling the designs of some, to a purpose opposite to their intention, in making the errors of others contribute to the general end. If this grand scheme had been exposed to *our* review for advice, if *we* had been consulted in its formation and its progress, how should we have criticised both the plan and its conductors? How should we have censured some of the agents as inadequate, condemned others as ill chosen, rejected one as unsuited, another as injurious! One critic would have insisted that the vehemence of Luther would mar any enterprise it might mean to advance; that so impetuous a projector would inevitably obstruct the establishment of a religion of meekness. Another would have pronounced, that among the human faculties, wit was, of all others, the least likely to assist the cause of piety; yet did Erasmus, by his exquisite satires on the ignorance and superstition of the priests, as completely contradict this opinion, as Luther, by his magnanimity and heroic perseverance, triumphantly overturned the other. This inconsiderate, blustering Henry, the human counsellor would have said, will ruin the cause, by uniting his hostility to the reformers, with his inconsistent resistance to the papal power; and yet this cause, his very perverseness contributed to promote. Another censor would have been quite certain that the timid policy and cautious feeling of Charles the Wise would infallibly obstruct those measures which they were actually tending to advance. Who among us, if his opinion had been asked, would not have fixed on the pontiff of Rome and the emperor of the Turks, as the two last human beings to be selected for promoting the reformed religion? Who would have ventured to assert that the money raised by indulgences, through the profligate venality of Leo, for building St. Peter's in his own metropolis, was actually laying the foundation of every protestant church in Britain—in Europe—in the world? Who could have predicted, that the Imperial Mussulman, in banishing learning from his dominions, was preparing, as if by concert, an overwhelming antagonist to the sottish ignorance of the monks? All these things, separately considered, we, in our captious wisdom, should have pronounced calculated to produce effects directly contrary to the actual result; yet these ingredients, which had no natural affinity, amalgamated by the Almighty hand, were made to accomplish one of the most important works that infinite wisdom, working by human means, has ever effected.

CHAP. III.

Practical uses of the doctrine of Providence.

We do not sufficiently make the doctrine of Providence a practical doctrine.—That the present dark dispensations which afflict the earth are indications of Almighty displeasure few dispute; but having admitted the general fact, who almost does not ascribe the cause of offence to others? How few consider themselves as awfully contributing to draw down the visitation! We look with an exclusive eye to the abandoned and the avowedly profligate, and ascribe the whole weight of the divine indignation to their misdeeds. But we forget that when a sudden tempest threatened destruction to the ship going to Tarshish, in which there was only Jonah who feared God, those who inquired into the cause of the storm, found *him* to be the very man. The cause of the present desolating storm, as a pious divine observed of that which darkened his day, may as probably be the offences of professing christians, as the presumptuous sins of the bolder transgressor. This apprehension should set us all on searching our hearts, for we cannot repent of the evil of which we are not conscious. It should put us upon watching against negligence; it should set us upon distrusting a false security, upon examining into the ground of our confidence. No dependence on the goodness of our spiritual condition, no trust in our exactness

in some peculiar duties, no fancied superiority of ourselves, to others, no exemption from gross and palpable disorders, should soothe us into a belief that we have no concern in the visitation. Throwing off their own guilt upon others was the second sin of the first offenders.

Another practical use of the doctrine of Providence is, to enable us to maintain a composed frame of spirit under his ordinary dispensations. If we kept up a sense of God's agency in common as well as in extraordinary occurrences—if we were practically persuaded that nothing happens but by divine appointment, it might still those fluctuations of mind, quiet those uncertainties of temper, conquer that unreasonable exaltation or depression, which arise from our not habitually reflecting that all things are determined in number, or weight, or measure, by infinite love. If we acted under the full conviction that he who first set the world in motion governs every creature in it—that we do not take our place upon that stage in space, or that period in time, which we choose, but where and when *He* pleases: that it is he who 'ordereth the bounds of our habitation, and fixeth our lot in life,' we should not only contemplate with sober awe the strange events of the age in which we may be living, but cheerfully submit to our individual difficulties, as arising from the same predisposition of causes. Our neglecting to cultivate the train of thought may account for those murmurs which arise in our hearts, both for the public calamities of the world, and the private vexations of life.

If we took God into the account, we should feel that, as rational subjects of his moral government, we are bound to submit to it: we should not indulge discontent and resentment at events which we should then allow were either by his appointment or permission, as we now acknowledge in the more extraordinary cases. But how few are there who think themselves obliged to endure without repining, the effects of accident, or the provocation of men? and this is because they see only the proximate cause, and do not perceive that God is the grand efficient. In our difficulties, if the sense of his presence were as strongly impressed upon us as the trial is powerfully felt, it would make the heart strong, and render the temptation feeble. Nor would it only strengthen us under temptation, but sustain us under affliction; we should become both humble by correction, and patient under it; we should be grateful in prosperity, without being elated by it. A deep conviction of God's authority over us and his property in us, would also make us kind to others as an acknowledgment that all is his. The very heathen entertained some sense of his sovereignty; they acknowledged at least their victories to proceed from him, when they dedicated their spoils *to the deliverer.*

If we maintained this constant sense of his providential government, we should be more instant in prayer, we should more fervently supplicate him in our distresses, and more devoutly adore him for his mercies. The recognition of his sovereignty infers the duty of prayer to him, f implicit trust in him, of unqualified submission to him; for the same argument which proves that he should govern, makes it right that we should obey; and the avowal of that obedience is alike consistent with the character of the subject, and the claims of the sovereign. Thus used, there is no consolation to an afflicted world like that which is derived from the position contained in the proclamation of the imperial penitent of Babylon, 'that the most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men;' that he ruleth not by an arbitrary will, but, to borrow the emphatic language of the Apocalypse, by the perfections of THE MIND THAT HATH WISDOM.

But, as we seem virtually to divide the affairs of the world into two portions, we talk as if we did not think certain ordinary trials considerable enough to come from God, nor of course to require that we should meet them with temper. Under these, therefore, we make ourselves what amends we can for the vexation of trials more severe, by indulging fretfulness, secure of impunity. But let us be assured of these two things, if it be a trial at all it comes from God, if it disturb our peace, however trivial in itself, it is not small to us, and therefore claims submission.

It is worth our observation that they who are ready to quarrel with Omnipotence for the infliction of pain and suffering, poverty and distress, seldom arraign him for their intellectual or moral deficiencies. Most men are better satisfied with their allotment of capacity than of health; of virtue than of riches; of skill than of power. We seldom grudgingly compare our mental endowments with those of others who are obviously more highly gifted, while we are sufficiently forward to repine at their superiority in worldly advantages. Though too sensibly alive to the narrower limits in which our fortune is confined, we do not lament our severer restrictions in the article of personal merit. In the latter instance vanity supports as completely as in the former envy disturbs.

Most of the calamities of human life originate with ourselves. Even sickness, shame, pain, and death were not originally the infliction of God. But out of many evils, whether sent us by his immediate hand, or brought on us by our own faults, much eventual good is educed by Him, who by turning our suffering to our benefit, repairs by grace the evils produced by sin. Without being the author of evil, the bare suggestion of which is blasphemy, he converts it to his own glory, by causing the effects of it to promote our good. If the virtuous suffer from the crimes of the wicked, it is because their imperfect goodness stood in need of chastisement. Even the wicked, who are suffering by their own sins, or the sins of each other, are sometimes brought back to God by mutual injuries, the sense of which awakens them to compunction for their own offences. God makes use of the faults even of good men to show them their own insufficiency, to abase them in their own eyes, to cure them of vanity and self-dependence. He makes use of their smaller failings, to set them on the watch against great ones; of their imperfections, to put them on their guard against sins; of their faults of inadvertency, to increase their dread of such as are wilful. This super-induced vigilance teaches them to fear all the resemblances, and to shun all the approaches to

sin. It is a salutary fear, which keeps them from using all the liberty they have; it leads them to avoid not only what is decidedly wrong, but to stop short of what is doubtful, to keep clear of what is suspicious: well knowing the thin partitions which separate danger from destruction. It teaches them to watch the buddings and germinations of evil, to anticipate the pernicious fruit in the opening blossom.

The weakness and inactivity of our faith expose us to continual distrust. When we ourselves are idle, we are disposed to suspect that the Omnipotent is not at work.—That process which we do not see, we are too much inclined to suspect is not going on. From this unhallowed egotism, where we are not the prime movers, we fancy that all stands still. The various parts of the scheme of Providence are sometimes connected by a thread so fine as to elude our dim sight;—but, though it may be so attenuated as to be invisible, it is never broken off. The plan is carrying on, and the work perhaps, about to be accomplished, while we are accusing the Great Artificer, as if he were capable of neglect, or liable to error. But if, after tracing Providence through many a labyrinth, we seem to lose sight of him: if, after having lost our clue, we are tempted to suspect that this operation is suspended, or that his agency has ceased, he is working all the time out of sight—he is proceeding, if the comparison may be allowed, like the fabled Arethusia, whose stream having disappeared in the place to which it had been followed up, is still making its way under ground; though we are not cured of our incredulity, till we again discover him, bursting forth like the same river, which, having pursued its hidden passage through every obstruction, rises once more in all its beauty in another and unexpected place.

But even while we are rebelling against his dispensations, we are taking our hints in the economy of public and private life, from the economy of Providence in the administration of the world. We govern our country by laws emulative of those by which he governs his creatures: we train our children by probationary discipline, as he trains his servants. Penal laws in state, like those of the divine Legislator, indicate no hatred to those to whom they are proclaimed, for every man is at liberty not to break them; they are enacted in the first instance for admonition rather than chastisement, and serve as much for prevention as punishment. The discipline maintained in all well ordered families is intended not only to promote their virtue, but their happiness. The intelligent child perceives his father's motive for restraining him, till the act of obedience having induced the habit, and both having broken in his rebellious will, he loves the parent the more for the restraint; on the other hand, the mismanaged and ruined son learns to despise the father, who has given him a license to which he has discernment enough to perceive he owes the miseries consequent upon his uncurbed appetites.

It is however to be lamented, that this great doctrine of God's universal superintendance is not only madly denied, or inconsistently overlooked by one class of men, but is foolishly perverted, or fanatically abused by another. Without entering upon the wide field of instances, we shall confine our remarks to two that are the most common. First, the fanciful, frivolous, and bold familiarity with which this supreme dictation and government are cited on the most trivial occasions, and adduced in a manner dishonourable to infinite wisdom, and derogatory to supreme goodness. The persons who are guilty of this fault seem not to perceive, that it is not more foolish and presumptuous to deny it altogether than to expect that God's particular Providence will interpose, in order to save their exertions, or excuse their industry. For though Providence directs and assists virtuous endeavours, he never, by superseding them, encourages idleness, or justifies presumption.

The highly censurable use to which some others convert this divine agency, is, when not only the pretence of trusting Providence is made the plea for the indolent desertion of their own duty; but an unwarrantable confidence in providential leadings is adopted to excuse their own imprudence. Great is the temerity, when Providence is virtually reproached for the ill success of our affairs, or pleaded as an apology for our own wilfulness, or as a vindication of our own absurdity in the failure of some foolish plan, or some irrational pursuit. We have no right to depend on a supernatural interposition to help us out of difficulties into which we have been thrown by our misconduct, or under distresses into which we have been plunged by our errors. God, though he knows the prayers which we may offer, and accepts the penitence which we feel, will not use his power to correct our ill-judged labours, any otherwise than by making us smart for their consequences.

The power of God as it is not an idle, so it is not a solitary prerogative. It is indeed an attribute in constant exercise; it is not kept for state, but use; not for display, but exercise; and as it is infinite, one half of the concerns of the universe are not, as we intimated before, suspended, because he is superintending the other half. He is perpetually examining the chronicles of human kind, and inspecting the register of human actions—not like the King of the Palace of Shushan,* because 'he cannot rest,' for Omniscience never slumbers or sleeps—nor like him to repair the wrongs of one man whose services had remained unrequited, but that, 'beholding the evil and the good,' no services may go unnoticed and unrecompensed, from the earliest offspring of pious Abel, to the latest oblation of faith in the end of time.

This view of things, and it is the view which the enlightened Christian takes, tends to correct his anger against second causes, and affords him such an assurance that every occurrence will be over-ruled by everlasting love for his eventual good—inspires him with such holy confidence in the promises of the Gospel, that he acquires a repose of spirit, not merely from compelled submission to authority, but from rational acquiescence in goodness. He feels that his confirmed belief in this universal agency is the only thing that can set his heart at rest, still its

* Ahasuerus—Esther, chap. vi.

perturbations, moderate its impatience, soothe its terrors, confirm its faith, preserve its peace, or, when it has suffered a momentary suspension, restore it.

Nor does God exercise his Providence alone, either in signal instances of retribution or in the hidden consolations of the believer; but those secret stings of conscience which goad and lacerate every guilty individual in any criminal pursuit—that lurking discontent which gives the lie to flattery, and mingles the note of discord with the music of acclamation—that unprompted misery of feeling which infuses wormwood into his sweetest pleasure, proceeds from the same providential infliction.

Some men seem to admit a Providence on a scale which expands their ideas, but fancy it an affront to conceive of Him on one which they think contracts them. If they allow that he takes a sweeping view of nations, yet they imply that it would be too minute an exercise of his superintendence to inspect individuals. The truth is, as we intimated before, men are too much disposed to frame their conceptions of God by the limited powers and capacities of human greatness. They observe, that a king who controls the affairs of a vast empire cannot possibly inspect the concerns of every private family, much less of every single subject. This limited capacity they unconsciously, yet irreverently transfer to the King of kings.—But as no concern is so vast as to encumber Omnipotence, so none is too diminutive to escape the eye of Omniscience. There is no argument for a general, but is also an argument for a particular Providence, unless we can prove that the whole is not made up of parts; that generals are not composed of particulars; that nations are not compounded of families; that societies are not formed of individuals; that chains are not composed of links; that sums are not made up of units; that the interests of a community do not grow out of the well-being of its members. The interests of a particular member, indeed, may sometimes appear to suffer from that which promotes the general good, yet he, by whose law the individual may seem to be injured, has means of remuneration or of comfort which may prevent the sufferer from being ultimately a loser. If, as we are assured, upon God's authority, that our tears are treasured up by him, will not their appropriate consolation be also provided?—Though *He whose footsteps are not known*, may act in some instances in a manner incomprehensible to us, yet if we allow that he acts wisely and holily in cases which we do comprehend, we should give him credit in the obscure and impenetrable cases, for he can no more act contrary to his attributes in the one instance than in the other.

Every intelligent being, therefore, should look up to divine Providence, not only as engaged in the government and disposal of states, but as exercised for his individual protection, peace, and comfort;—should look habitually to Him who confers favour without claim, and happiness without merit; to him whose veracity fulfils all the promises which his goodness has made—to Him whose pity commiserates the afflicted, whose bounty supplies the indigent, whose long suffering bears with the rebellious, whose love absolves the guilty, whose mercy in Christ Jesus accepts the penitent. Such is the fulness of that attribute which we sum up in a single word, *the goodness of God*. It is this goodness which influences his other attributes in our favour, attributes which would else necessarily act against creatures at once sinful and impotent. It makes that wisdom which sees our weakness strengthen us, and that power which might overwhelm us, act for our preservation Without this goodness, all his other perfections would be to us as the beauties of his natural creation would be, if the sun were blotted from the firmament—they might indeed exist, but without this illuminating and cherishing principle, as we should neither have seen nor felt them, so to us they could not be said *to be*.

Some Christians seem to view the Almighty as encircled with no attribute but his sovereignty. God, in establishing his moral government, might indeed have acted *solely* by his sovereignty. He might have pleaded no other reason for our allegiance but his absolute dominion. He might have governed arbitrarily, without explaining the nature of his requisitions. He might have reigned over us as a king, without endearing himself to us as a father. He might have exacted fealty, without the offer of remuneration. Instead of this, while he maintained his entire title to our obedience, he mitigates the austerity of the command by the invitations of his kindness, and softens the rigour of authority by the allurement of his promises. In holding out menaces to deter us from disobedience, he balances them with the offered plenitude of our own felicity, and thus instead of terrifying, attracts us to obedience. If he threatens, it is that by intimidating he may be spared the necessity of punishing; if he promises—it is that we may perceive our happiness to be bound up with our obedience. Thus his goodness invites us to a compliance, which his sovereignty might have demanded on the single ground that it was his due. Whereas he seems almost to wave our duty as a claim, as if to afford us the merit of a voluntary obedience; though the very will to obey is his gift, he promises to accept it as if it were our own act. He first inspires the desire and then rewards it. Thus his power, if we may hazard the expression, gives place to his goodness, and he presses us by tenderness almost more than he constrains us by authority. He even condescends to make our happiness no less a motive for our duty than his injunctions; hear his affectionate apostrophe—'Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river!'

It was that his goodness might have the precedency of his Omnipotence that he vouchsafed to give the law in the shape of a covenant. He stooped to enter into a sort of reciprocal engagement with his creatures,—he condescended to stipulate with the work of his hands! But the consummation of his goodness was reserved for his work of Redemption. Here he not only performed the office, but assumed the name of Love; a name with which, notwithstanding all his preceding wonders of Providence and Grace, he was never invested till after the completion

of this last, greatest act:—an act towards his pardoned rebels, not only of indemnity but promotion;—an act which the angels desire to scrutinize, and which man will never fully comprehend till he enters on that beatitude to which it has introduced him.

CHAP. IV

"*Thy will be done.*"

To desire to know the Divine will is the first duty of a being so ignorant as man; to endeavour to obey it is the most indispensable duty of a being at once so corrupt and so dependent. The Holy Scriptures frequently comprise the essence of the Christian temper in some short aphorism, apostrophe, or definition. The essential spirit of the Christian life may be said to be included in this one brief petition of the Christian's prayer, 'THY WILL BE DONE;' just as the distinguishing characteristic of the irreligious may be said to consist in following his own will.

There is a haughty spirit which though it will not complain, does not care to submit. It arrogates to itself the dignity of enduring, without any claim to the meekness of yielding. Its silence is stubbornness, its fortitude is pride; its calmness is apathy without, and discontent within. In such characters, it is not so much the will of God which is the rule of conduct, as the scorn of pusillanimity. Not seldom indeed the mind puts in a claim for a merit to which the nerves could make out a better title. Yet the suffering which arises from acute feelings is so far from deducting from the virtue of resignation, that, when it does not impede the sacrifice, it enhances the value. True resignation is the hardest lesson in the whole school of Christ. It is the oftenest taught and the latest learnt. It is not a task which, when once got over in some particular instance, leaves us master of the subject. The necessity of following up the lesson we have begun, presents itself almost every day in some new shape, occurs under some fresh modification. The submission of yesterday does not exonerate us from the resignation of to-day. The principle, indeed, once thoroughly wrought into the soul, gradually reconciles us to the frequent demand for its exercise, and renders every succesive call more easy.

We read dissertations on this subject, not only with the most entire concurrence of the judgment, but with the most apparent acquiescence of the mind. We write essays upon it in the hour of peace and composure, and fancy that what we have discussed with so much ease and self-complacence, in favour of which we offer so many arguments to convince, and so many motives to persuade, cannot be very difficult to practise. But to convince the understanding and to correct the will is a very different undertaking; and not less difficult when it comes to our own case than it was in the case of those for whom we have been so coolly and dogmatically prescribing. It is not till we practically find how slowly our own arguments produce any effect on ourselves that we cease to marvel at their inefficacy on others. The sick physician tastes with disgust the bitterness of the draught, to the swallowing of which he wondered the patient had felt so much repugnance; and the reader is sometimes convinced by the arguments which fail of their effect on the writer, when he is called, not to discuss, but to act, not to reason, but to suffer. The theory is so just and the duty so obvious, that even bad men assent to it; the exercise so trying that the best men find it more easy to commend the rule than adopt it. But he who has once gotten engraved, not in his memory but in his heart, this divine precept, THY WILL BE DONE, has made a proficiency which will render all subsequent instruction comparatively easy.

Though sacrifices and oblations were offered to God under the law by his own express appointment, yet he peremptorily rejected them by his prophets, when presented as substitutes instead of signs. Will he, under a more perfect dispensation, accept of any observances which are meant to supersede internal dedication—of any offerings unaccompanied by complete desire of acquiescence in his will? 'My son, give me thine heart,' is his brief but imperative command. But before we can be brought to comply with the spirit of this requisition, God must enlighten our understanding that our devotion may be rational, he must rectify our will that it may be voluntary, he must purify our heart that it may be spiritual.

Submission is a duty of such high and holy import that it can only be learnt of the Great Teacher. If it could have been acquired by mere moral institution, the wise sayings of the ancient philosophers would have taught it. But their most elevated standard was low: their strongest motives were the brevity of life, the instability of fortune, the dignity of suffering virtue, things within their narrow sphere of judging; things true indeed as far as they go, but a substratum by no means equal to the superstructure to be built on it. It wanted depth, and strength, and solidity for the purposes of support. It wanted the only true basis, the assurance that God orders all things according to the purposes of his will for our final good; it wanted that only sure ground of faith by which the genuine Christian cheerfully submits in entire dependance on the promises of the gospel.

Nor let us fancy that we are to be languid and inactive recipients of the divine dispensations. Our own souls must be enlarged, our own views must be ennobled, our own spirit must be dilated. An inoperative acquiescence is not all that is required of us: and if we must not slacken our zeal in doing good, so we must not be remiss in opposing evil, on the flimsy ground that God has permitted evil to infest the world. If it be his will to permit sin, it is an opposition to his will when we do not labour to counteract it. This surrender therefore, of our will to that of God, takes in a large sweep of actual duties, as well as the whole compass of passive obedience. It involves doing as well as suffering, activity as well as acquiescence, zeal as well as forbearance. Yet the concise petition daily slips off the tongue without our reflecting on the weight

of the obligation we are imposing on ourselves. We do not consider the extent and consequences of the prayer we are offering, the sacrifices, the trials, the privations it may involve, and the large indefinite obedience to all the known and unknown purposes of infinite wisdom to which we are pledging ourselves.

There is no case in which we more shelter ourselves in generalities. Verbal sacrifices cost little, cost nothing. The familiar habit of repeating the petition almost tempts us to fancy that the duty is as easy as the request is short. We are ready to think that a prayer rounded off in four monosyllables can scarcely involve duties co-extensive with our whole course of being; that, in uttering them, we renounce all right in ourselves, that we acknowledge the universal indefeasible title of *the blessed and only potentate;* that we make over to him the right to do in us, and with us, and by us, whatever he sees good for ourselves, whatever will promote his glory, though by means sometimes as incomprehensible to our understanding, as unacceptable to our will, because we neither know the motive, nor perceive the end. These simple words express an act of faith the most sublime, an act of allegiance the most unqualified; and, while they make a declaration of entire submission to a Sovereign the most absolute, they are, at the same time, a recognition of love to a Father the most beneficent.

We must remember, that in offering this prayer, we may by our own request, be offering to resign what we most dread to lose, to give up what is dear to us as our own soul; we may be calling on our heavenly Father to withhold what we are most anxiously labouring to attain, and to withdraw what we are most sedulously endeavouring to keep. We are solemnly renouncing our property in ourselves, we are distinctly making ourselves over again to Him whose we already are. We specifically entreat him to do with us what he pleases, to mould us to a conformity to his image, without which we shall never be resigned to his will. In short, to dispose of us as his infinite wisdom sees best, however contrary to the scheme which our blindness has laid down as the path to unquestionable happiness.

To render this trying petition easy to us, is one great reason why God by such a variety of providences, afflicts and brings us low. He knows that we want incentives to humility, even more than incitements to virtuous actions. He shows us in many ways, that self-sufficiency and happiness are incompatible, that pride and peace are irreconcilable; that, following our own way, and doing our own will, which we consider to be of the very essence of felicity, is in direct opposition to it.

'Christianity,' says bishop Horsely, 'involves many paradoxes, but no contradictions.' To be able to say with entire surrender of the heart, 'Thy will be done,' is the true liberty of the children of God, that liberty with which Christ has made them free. It is a liberty, not which delivers us from restraint, but which, freeing us from our subjection to the senses, makes us find no pleasure but in order, no safety but in the obedience of an intelligent being to his rightful Lord. In delivering us from the heavy bondage of sin, it transfers us to the 'easy yoke of Christ,' from the galling slavery of the world to the 'light burden' of him who overcame it.

This liberty in giving a true direction to the affections, gives them amplitude as well as elevation. The more unconstrained the will becomes, the more it fixes on the object; once fixed on the highest, it does not use its liberty for versatility, but for constancy, not for change, but for fidelity, not for wavering, but adherence.

It is, therefore, no less our interest, than our duty, to keep the mind in an habitual posture of submission. 'Adam,' says Dr. Hammond, 'after his expulsion, was a greater slave in the wilderness than he had been in the inclosure.' If the barbarian ambassador came express to the Romans to negotiate from his country for permission to be their servants, declaring, that a voluntary submission even to a foreign power, was preferable to a wild and disorderly freedom, well may the Christian triumph in the peace and security to be attained by a complete subjugation to Him who is emphatically called *the God of order.*

A vital faith manifests itself in vital acts. 'Thy will be done,' is eminently a practical petition. The first indication of the gaoler's change of heart was a practical indication. He did not ask, 'Are there few that be saved,' but 'What shall *I* do to be saved?' The first symptom St. Paul gave of his conversion, was a practical symptom: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' He entered on his new course with a total renunciation of his own will. It seemed to this great Apostle, to be the turning point between infidelity and piety, whether he should follow his own will or the will of God. He did not amuse his curiosity with speculative questions. His own immediate and grand concern engrossed his whole soul. Nor was his question a mere hasty effusion, an interrogative springing out of that mixed feeling of awe and wonder which accompanied his first overwhelming convictions. It became the abiding principle which governed his future life, which made him in labours more abundant. Every successive act of duty, every future sacrifice of ease, sprung from it, was influenced by it. His own will, his ardent, impetuous, fiery will, was not merely subdued, it was extinguished. His powerful mind indeed lost none of its energy, but his proud heart relinquished all its independence.

We allow and adopt the term *devotion* as an indispensable part of religion, because it is supposed to be limited to the act; but *devotedness*, from which it is derived, does not meet with such ready acceptation, because this is a habit, and an habit involves more than an act; it pledges us to consistency, it implies fixedness of character, a general confirmed state of mind, a giving up what we are, and have, and do, to God. Devotedness does not consist in the length of our prayers, nor in the number of our good works, for, though these are the surest evidences of piety, they are not its essence. Devotedness consists in doing and suffering, bearing and forbearing in the way which God prescribes. The most inconsiderable duty performed with alacrity, if it oppose our own incli-

nation; the most ordinary trial met with a right spirit, is more acceptable to him than a greater effort of our own devising. We do not commend a servant for his activity, if ever so fervently exercised, in doing whatever gratifies his own fancy; we do not consider his performance as obedience, unless his activity has been exercised in doing what we required of him. Now, how can we insist on his doing what contradicts his own humour, while we allow ourselves to feel repugnance in serving our heavenly Master, when his commands do not exactly fall in with our own inclination?

We must also give God leave, not only to take his own way, but his own time. The appointment of seasons, as well as of events, is his. 'He waits to be gracious.' If he delays, it is because we are not yet brought to that state which fits us for the grant of our request. It is not he who must be brought about, but we ourselves. Or, perhaps, he refuses the thing we ask, in order to give us a better. We implore success in an undertaking, instead of which, he gives us content under the disappointment. We ask for the removal of pain; he gives us patience under it. We desire deliverance from our enemies; he sees that we have not yet turned their enmity to our improvement, and he will bring us to a better temper by further exercise. We desire him to avert some impending trial, instead of averting it, he takes away its bitterness; he mitigates what we believed would be intolerable, by giving us a right temper under it. How, then, can we say he has failed of his promise, if he gives something more truly valuable than we had requested at his hands?

Some virtues are more called out in one condition of life, and some in another. The exercise of certain qualities has its time and place; but an endeavour after conformity to the image of God, which is best attained by submission to his will, is of perpetual obligation. If he does not require all virtues under all circumstances, there is no state or condition in which he does not require that to which our church perpetually calls us, 'an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.' We may have no time, no capacity, no special call for deeds of notorious usefulness; but whatever be our pursuits, engagements, or abilities, it will intrench on no time, require no specific call, interfere with no duty, to subdue our perverse will. Though the most severe of all duties, it infringes on no other, but will be the more effectually fulfilled by the very difficulties attending on other pursuits and engagements.

We are so fond of having our own will, that it is astonishing we do not oftener employ it for our own good; for our inward peace is augmented in exact proportion as our repugnance to the Divine will diminishes. Were the conquest over the one complete, the enjoyment of the other would be perfect. But the Holy Spirit does not assume his emphatical title, the COMFORTER, till his previous offices have operated on the heart, till he has 'reproved us of sin, of righteousness, of judgment.'

God makes use of methods inconceivable to us, to bring us to the submission which we are more ready to request with our lips, than to desire with our hearts. By an imperceptible operation he is ever at work for our good; he promotes it by objects the most unlikely. He employs means to our shallow views the most improbable to effect his own gracious purposes. In every thing he evinces that his thoughts are not as our thoughts. He overrules the opposition of our enemies, the defection of our friends, the faults of our children—the loss of our fortune as well as the disappointments attending its possession—the unsatisfactoriness of pleasures as well as the privation—the contradiction of our desires—the failure of plans which we thought we had concerted, not only with good judgment but pure intentions. He makes us sensible of our faults by the mischiefs they bring upon us; and acknowledges our blindness by extracting from it consequences diametrically opposite to those which our actions were intended to produce.

Our love to God is stamped with the same imperfection with all our other graces. If we love him at all, it is as it were traditionally, hereditary, professionally; it is a love of form and not of feeling, of education and not of sentiment, of sense and not of faith. It is at best a submission to authority, and not an effusion of voluntary gratitude, a conviction of the understanding, and not a cordiality of the affections. We rather assume we have this grace than actually possess it, we rather take it for granted on unexamined grounds, than cherish it as a principle from which whatever good we have must proceed, and from which, if it does not proceed, the principle does not exist.

Surely, says the oppugners of divine Providence in considering the calamities inflicted on good men, if God loved virtue, he would not oppress the virtuous. Surely Omnipotence may find a way to make his children good, without making them miserable. But have these casuists ever devised a means by which men may be made good without being made humble, or happy, without being made holy, or holy without trials? Unapt scholars indeed we are in learning the lessons taught! But the teacher is not the less perfect because of the imbecility of his children.

If it be the design of Infinite Goodness to disengage us from the world, to detach us from ourselves, and to purify us to himself, the purification by sufferings seems the most obvious method. The same effect could not be any otherwise produced, except by miracles, and God is an economist of his means in grace as well as in nature. He deals out all gifts by measure. His operation in both is progressive. Successive events operate in one case as time and age in the other. As suns and showers so gradually mature the fruits of the earth, that the growth is rather perpetual than perceptible, so God commonly carries on the work of renovation in the heart silently and slowly, by means suitable and simple, though to us imperceptible, and sometimes unintelligible. Were the plans more obvious, and the process ostensible, there would be no room left for the operations of faith, no call for the exercise of patience, no demand for the grace of humility. The road to perfection is tedious and suffering, steep and rugged;

our impatience would leap over all the intervening space which keeps us from it, rather than climb it by slow and painful steps. We would fain be spared the sorrow and shame of our own errors, of all their vexatious obstructions, all their dishonourable impediments. We would be completely good and happy at once without passing through the stages and gradations which lead to goodness and happiness. We require an instantaneous transformation which costs us nothing; the Spirit of God works by a gradual process which costs us much. We would combine his favour with our self-indulgence; we would be spared the trials he has appointed without losing the felicity he has promised. We complain of the severity of the operation, but the operation would not be so severe, if the disease did not lie so deep.

Besides, the afflictions which God appoints, are not seldom sent to save us from those we should bring on ourselves, and which might have added guilt to misery.—He threatens, but it is that he may finally save. If 'punishment is his strange,' it is also his necessary 'works.' Even in the sorest affliction, the loss of those we love, there may be a mercy impenetrable to us. —God has, perhaps, laid up for us in heaven that friend whom he might have lost in eternity, had he been restored to our prayers here. But if the affliction be not improved, it is, indeed unspeakable heavy. If the loss of our friend does not help to detach us from the world, we have the calamity without the indemnification; we are deprived of our treasure without any advantage to ourselves. If the loss of him we loved does not make us more earnest to secure our salvation, we may lose at once our friend and our soul.—To endure the penalty and lose the profit, is to be emphatically miserable.

Sufferings are the only relics of the true cross, and when Divine grace turns them to our spiritual good, they almost perform the miracles which blind superstition ascribes to the false one. God mercifully takes from us what we have not courage to offer him; but if, when he resumes it, he sanctifies the loss, let us not repine. It was his while it was ours. He was the proprietor while we were the possessors.

Though we profess a general readiness to submit to the Divine will, there is nothing in which we are more liable to illusion. Self-love is a subtle casuist. We invent distinctions. We too critically discriminate between afflictions which proceed more immediately from God, and disappointments which come from the world. To the former we acknowledge, in words at least, our willingness to submit. In the latter, though equally his dispensation, we seem to feel justified in refusing to acquiesce. God does not desire us to inflict punishments on ourselves, he only expects us to bear with patience those he inflicts on us, whether they come more immediately from himself or through the medium of his creatures.

Love being the root of obedience, it is no test of that obedience, if we obey God only in things which do not cross our inclinations, while we disobey him in things that are repugnant to them. Not to obey except when it costs us nothing is rather to please ourselves than God, for it is evident we should disobey him in these also if the allurement were equally powerful in these cases as in the others. We may, indeed, plead an apology that the command we resist is of less importance than that with which we comply; but this is a false excuse, for the authority which enjoins the least, is the same with that which commands the greatest; and it is the authority by which we are to submit, as much as to the command.

There is a passage in St. Luke which does not seem to be always brought to bear on this point as fully as it ought: 'unless a man for sake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. This does not seem to be quite identical with the command in another place, that a man should 'sell all that he has,' &c. When the Christian world indeed was in its infancy, the literal requisition in both cases was absolutely necessary. But it appears to be a more liberal interpretation of the command, as 'forsaking,' all that we have, extends to a full and entire consecration of ourselves to God, a dedication without reserve, not of fortune only, but of every desire, every faculty, every inclination, every talent; a resignation of the whole will, a surrender of the whole soul. It is this surrender which alone sanctifies our best actions. It is this pure oblation, this offering of unshared affection, this unmaimed sacrifice, which is alone acceptable to God, through *that full, perfect, and sufficient sacrafice, oblation, and satisfaction* made for the sins of the whole world. Our money he will not accept without our good will, our devotions without our affections, our services without our hearts. Like the prevaricating pair, whose duplicity was punished by instant death, whatever we keep back will annihilate the value of what we bring. It will be nothing if it be not all.*

CHAP. V.

On Parable.

It is obvious, that the reason why mankind, in general, are so much delighted with allegory and metaphor, is, because they are so proportioned to our senses, those first inlets of ideas. Ideas gained by the senses quickly pass into the region of the imagination; and from thence, more particularly the illiterate and uninformed, fetch materials for the employment of their reason.

Little reaches the understanding of the mass but through this medium. Their minds are not fitted for the reception of abstract truth. Dry argumentative instruction, therefore, is not proportioned to their capacity; the faculty by which a right conclusion is drawn, is, in them the most defective; they rather feel strongly than judge accurately: and their feelings are awakened by the impression made on their senses.

The connexion of these remarks with the subject of instruction by parable, is obvious. It is the nature of parable to open the doctrine which it professes to conceal. By engaging attention

* Acts, chap. v.

and exciting curiosity, it developes truth with more effect than by a more explicit exposition. By laying hold on the imagination, parable insinuates itself into the affections, and, by the intercommunication of the faculties, the understanding is made to apprehend the truth which was proposed to the fancy.

There is commonly found sufficient rectitude of judgment in the generality to decide fairly on any point within their reach of mind, if the decision neither opposes their interest nor interferes with their prejudice. If you can separate the truth from any personal concern of their own, their verdict will probably be just: but if their views are clouded by passion, or biassed by selfishness, that man must possess a more than ordinary degree of integrity who decides against himself and in favour of what is right.

In the admirably devised parable of Nathan, David's eager condemnation of the unsuspected offender is a striking instance of the delusion of sin and the blindness of self-love. He who had lived a whole year in the unrepented commission of one of the blackest crimes of the decalogue, and who to secure to himself the object for which he had committed it, perpetrated another almost more heinous, and that with an hypocrisy foreign to his character, could in an instant denounce death on the imaginary offender for a fault comparatively trifling. The vehemence of his resentment even overstepped the limits of his natural justice, in decreeing a punishment disproportioned to the crime, while he remained dead to his own deep delinquency. A pointed parable instantly surprised him into the most bitter self-reproach. A direct accusation might have inflamed him before he was thus prepared; and, in the one case, he might have punished the accuser, by whom, in the other, he was brought to the deepest self-abasement. The prudent prophet did not rashly reproach the king with the crime he wished him to condemn, but placed the fault at such a distance, and in such a proper point of view, that he first procured his impartial judgment, and afterwards his self-condemnation. An important lesson, not only to the offender, but to the reprover.

He 'who knew what was in man,' and who intended his religion, not for a few critics to argue upon, but for a whole world to act upon, frequently adopted the mode of instructing by allegory. Though he sometimes condescended to unveil the hidden sense, by disclosing the moral meaning, in some short, but most significant comment; yet he usually left the application to those whom he meant to benefit by the doctrine. The truth which spoke strongly to their prejudices, by the veil in which it was wrapped, spared the shame while it conveyed the instruction, and they probably found a gratification in the ingenuity of their own solution which contributed to reconcile them to the sharpness of the reproof.

The most unjust and prejudiced of the Jews were, by this wise management frequently drawn in to give an unconscious testimony against themselves; this was especially the case in the instance of the householder and his servants. Had the truth they were led to deduce from this parable, been presented in the offensive form of a direct charge, it would have fired them with inexpressible indignation.

Christians who abound in zeal, but are defective in knowledge and prudence, would do well to remember, that *discretion* made a remarkable, though not disproportionate part of the Redeemer's character; he never invited attack by imprudence, or provoked hostility by intemperate rashness. When argument was not listened to, when persuasion was of no avail, when even all his miracles of mercy were misrepresented, and his divine beneficence thrown away, so that all farther attempts to do good were unavailing, *he withdrew to another place;* there, indeed, to experience the same malignity, there to exercise the same compassion.

The divine Author of our religion gave also the example of teaching not only by parable, but by simple propositions, detached truths, pointed interrogations, positive injunctions, and independent prohibitions, rather than by elaborate and continuous dissertation. He instructed not only by consecutive arguments, but by invitations, and dissuasives adapted to the feelings, and intelligible to the apprehensions of his audience. He drew their attention by popular illusions, delighted it by vivid representations, and fixed it by reference to actual events. He alluded to the Galileans, crushed by the falling tower, which they remembered—to local scenery—the vines of Gethsemane, which they beheld, while he was descanting respectively upon repentance, and upon himself, as the 'true vine.' By these simple, but powerful and suitable methods, he brought their daily habits, and every day ideas, to run in the same channel with their principles and their duties, and made every object with which they were surrounded contribute its contingent to their instruction.

The lower ranks, who most earnestly sought access to his person, could form a tolerable exact judgment on the things he taught, by the aptness of his allusions to what they saw, and felt, and heard. The humble situation he assumed, also, prevented their being intimidated by power, or influenced by authority. It at once made their attendance a voluntary act, and their assent an unbiassed conviction. The questions proposed with a simple desire of instruction, were answered with condescending kindness; those dictated by curiosity or craft, were repelled with wisdom, or answered, not by gratifying importunity, but by grafting on the reply some higher instruction than the inquirer had either proposed or desired. Where a direct answer would, by exciting prejudice, have impeded usefulness, he evaded the particular question by enforcing from it some general truth. On the application of the man whose brother had refused to divide the inheritance with him —in declining to interfere judicially, he gave a great moral lecture of universal use against avarice, while he prudently avoided the subject of particular litigation.

His answer to the entangling question, 'And who is my neighbour?' suggested the instructive illustration of the duty to a neighbour, in that brief, but highly finished apologue of the good Samaritan. The Jews, who would never have owned that a Samaritan was their neigh-

bour, were, by this pious management, drawn in to acknowledge, that every man, without regard to country, who was even of a hostile country, if he needed their assistance, was their neighbour. In this slight outline, three characters are sketched with so much spirit and distinctness, that, as Mr. Boyle says of Scripture truths in general, they resemble those portraits, whose eyes, every one who enters the room, fancies are fixed on him.

False zeal, which he generally found associated with pride and hypocrisy, was almost the only vice which extorted from him unmitigated severity: if he sometimes corrected presumption and repelled malicious inquisitiveness, he uniformly encouraged distress to approach, and penitence to address him. The most indirect of his instructions inculcated or encouraged goodness. The most simple of his reasonings were irrefragable without the formality of syllogism; and his brief, but powerful persuasions went straight to the heart, which the most elaborate discussions might have left unmoved.—Every hearer, however illiterate, would at once seize his meaning, except those who found themselves interested in not understanding it; every spectator, 'if they believed not him, would believe his works,' if pride had not blinded their eyes, if prejudice had not barred up their hearts.

Thus, if in the Gospels, the great doctrines of religion are not always conveyed in a didactic form, or linked with logical arrangement, some important truth meets us at every turn, is held out in some brief sentence; some hint is dropped that may awaken, recal, quicken, or revive perpetual attention. The same spirit pervades every part; we are reminded without being fatigued; and, whatever is the point to be pressed, some informing, alarming, or consoling doctrine is extracted from it, or grows out of it.

The Scriptures, however, are so far from setting aside the use of reason, that all their precepts are addressed to it. If they are delivered in a popular manner, and often in independent maxims, or reason, by combining them methodizes the detached passages into a perfect system; so that by a combination, which it is in the power of every intelligent reader to make, a complete rule of practice is collected. The scattered precepts are embodied in examples illustrated by figures, and exemplified by parables.—These always suppose the mind of the hearer to be possessed of a certain degree of common knowledge, without which the proposed instruction would be unintelligible. For, if the Gospel does not address its disciples as if they were philosophers and mathematicians, it always supposes them to possess plain sense and ordinary information; to have acquaintance with human, if not with elevated life. The allusions and imagery with which it abounds would have been superfluous if the hearers had not been previously acquainted with the objects and circumstances to which the image is referred, from which the parallel is drawn, to which the allusion is made.

Our heavenly Father, in his offers of illumination, does not expect we should open our mental eyes to this superinduced light, without opening our understandings to natural and rational information, but expects that we should apply the faculties bestowed, to the objects proposed to them. We put ourselves, therefore, in the fairest way of obtaining his assistance, when we most diligently use all the means and materials he has given us; comparing together his works and his word; not setting up our understanding against his revelation, but, with deep humility, applying the one to enable us to comprehend the other; not extinguishing our faculties, but our pride; not laying our understanding asleep, but casting it at the foot of the cross. We have dwelt on this point the more, from having observed, that some religious persons are apt to speak with contempt of great natural endowments as if they were not the gift of God, but of some inferior power: the prudently pious, on the other hand, while they use them to the end for which they were conferred, keep them in due subordination, and restrict them to their proper office. Abilities are the gift of God, and next to his grace, though with an immense interval, his best gift; but are never so truly estimable as when they are dedicated to promote his glory.

Our heavenly Instructor, still more to accommodate his parables to the capacities of his audience, adopted the broad line of instruction conveyed under a few strong features of general parallel, a few leading points of obvious coincidence, without attending to petty exactnesses or stooping to trivial niceties of correspondence. We are not, therefore, to hunt after minute resemblances, nor to cavil at slight discrepancies. We should rather imitate his example, by confining our illustration to the more important circumstances of likeness instead of raising such as are insignificant into undue distinction.—This critical elaboration, this amplifying mode, which ramifies a general idea into all the minutiæ of parallel, would only serve to divert the attention, and split it into so many divisions, that the main object would be lost sight of.

The author once heard a sermon which had for its text 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' The preacher, a really good man, but wanting this discretion, not contented with a simple application of the figure, instead of a general allusion to the powerfully penetrating and correcting nature of this mineral, instead of observing that salt was used in all the ancient sacrifices, indulged himself in a wide range, chemical and culinary, of all the properties of salt, devoting a separate head to each quality. A long discussion on its antiseptic properties, its solution and neutralization, led to rather a luxurious exhibition of the relishes it communicates to various viands. On the whole, the discourse seemed better adapted for an audience composed of the authors of the Pharmacopœia, or a society of cooks, than for a plain untechnical congregation.

But to return. Who can reflect without admiration on the engaging variety with which the great Teacher labours to impress every important truth? Whenever different aspects of the same doctrine were likely still more forcibly to seize the attention, still more deeply to touch the heart, still more powerfully to awaken the conscience, he does not content himself with a

single allegory. In his awful exhibition of the inestimable value of an immortal soul, he does not coolly describe the repentance of a single sinner as viewed with complacency by the highest order of created intelligences, but as adding 'joy' to bliss already perfected in immortality. He does not limit his instruction to one metaphorical illustration of the delight of the heavenly hosts, but extends it to three, finishing the climax by that most endearing and touching of all moral and allegorical pictures, the restoration of the prodigal to his father's love.

But this triple use of the same species of allegory—each instance rising above the other, in beauty and in force, each adding fresh weight to one momentous point—he most emphatically employs in the last discourse previous to his final suffering; we mean in his sublime illustration of the solemnities of the last day, in three successive parables all tending to impress the same awful truth.

As he well knew every accessible point of the human heart, so there was none which he did not touch. But the grand circumstance which carried his instruction so directly home to the hearts and consciences of men, was, that he not only taught, but 'did all things well.' His doctrines were so digested into his life, his instructions so melted into his practice, that it rendered goodness visible as well as perfect; and these analogies and resemblances were not only admirably, but uniformly correspondent. He did not content himself like those heathen philosophers, to whose affable conduct in society that of the blessed Redeemer has lately been so impiously compared, (though their motives differed, as much as the desire of converting sinners differs from delighting in them,) with exhibiting systems without morals, and a rule without a pattern, but the purity and perfection of his divine character gave light to knowledge, and life to document.

CHAP. VI.

On the parable of the Talents.

Our Lord's parables had been sometimes indicative of existing circumstances; sometimes predictive of events which related to futurity. After having, in his preceding allegories, by practical lessons, encouraged the prepared and exhorted the unprepared, to look for the kingdom of God, he closed his parabolical* instructions by an awful exhibition of their fitness or unfitness for that everlasting kingdom; in which he unfolds what their condition will be, when all mystery, all instruction, all preparation, shall be at an end; when every act of every being shall be laid as bare before the eyes of the whole assembled world, as it was seen in its commission by HIS, from whom nothing is hid. The last of these three prophetic scenes is indeed not so much a parable as a picture; not so much an allegory as a literal representation: the solemn reality rises above all figure, and could never have been so forcibly conveyed as by this plain, yet most sublime delineation.

The conclusion immediately to be drawn from the second of these parables, the Parable of the Talents, is, that we have nothing that is properly our own, nothing that is underived from God. Every talent is a deposit placed in our hands, not for our exclusive benefit, but for the good of others. Whatever we possess which may either be improved to God's glory or perverted to his dishonour, comes within the description of a talent. To use any of our possessions, therefore, as if we had an independent right to the disposal of them, is to usurp the prerogative of the Giver. Many, it is to be feared, will wait till that great disclosing day which will throw a blaze of light on all motives, as well as all actions, before they will be convinced of the fallacy of that popular maxim, that a man may do what he will with his own. He has indeed a full right to his proprietorship with respect to other men, but, with respect to God, he will find he had no exclusive property. Whatever portion of his possessions conscience ought to have turned over from vanity to charity, from sensuality to piety, he may find too late, was not his own, but his who gave it him for other purposes.

God proportions his requisitions to his gifts. The one is regulated by the measure of the other. As duties and obligations are peculiar and personal, we are not to trench on the sphere of others. It is of our own talent, we must render our own account. A capacity, however, to know our duty, and to love and serve God, as they are indiscriminately bestowed, so the inquiry into the use made of them will be universal, while the reward or punishment will be individually assigned.

Deficiency and excess are the Scylla and Charybdis between which we seldom steer safely. If our talents are splendid, we are subject to err on the side of display; if mean, totally to suppress their exercise, apologizing for our indolence by our insignificance; but mediocrity of talents is as insufficient an excuse for sloth, as superior genius is for vanity. The true way would be, to exercise the brightest faculties with humility, and the most inconsiderable with fidelity. The faithful and highly gifted servants in the parable, it is apparent, were so far from being lifted into pride, or seduced into negligence, by the greater importance of the trust committed to them, that they considered the largeness of their agency as an augmentation of their responsibility.—*They* did the will of their lord without conditioning or debating. Their slothful associate, instead of doing it, contented himself with arguing about it. He who disputed much, had done nothing: he should have known that Christianity is not a matter of debate, but of obedience.

There is no one doctrine of Holy Scripture either insignificant or merely theoretical. That which the parable teaches, is highly and specially practical. The instruction to be deduced from it, is as extensive as the gifts of God to his creatures, as the obligations of man to his benefactor. It is most especially practical, as it designates this world to be a scene of business.

* See Matthew xxv.

action, exertion, diligence. It inculcates the high and complicated duty of laying out ourselves for the glory of our Maker, and the exercise of an implicit obedience to his will. God has not given us the command to work, without furnishing us with instruments with which to labour, and suitable materials to work upon. Our talents, such as *riches*, *power*, *influence*, *wisdom*, *learning*, *time*, are those instruments. The wants, helplessness, and ignorance of mankind, are the objects to which these instruments are to be applied. These talents are bestowed in various proportions, as to their value, as well as in different degrees, as to the quantity and number. He who is favoured with more abundant endowments, should mix with his gratitude for the gift, an abiding sense of his own greater accountableness. He who is slenderly furnished, should never plead that the inferiority of his trust is an excuse for his negligence. The conviction that the Great Master will not exact beyond the proportion of his gift, though an encouragement to those whom his providence has placed in a narrow sphere of usefulness, is no discharge from their diligence. Is it reasonable, that he who has less to do, should therefore do nothing? When little is expected from us, not to do that little enhances the crime; and it aggravates the ingratitude, when we convert our master's more moderate demands into a pretence for absolute supineness.

He who is not called upon to relieve the necessities, or to enlighten the ignorance of others, has still a weighty work upon his hands: he has the care of his own soul. If he is deficient in learning, and natural abilities—if he has little credit, and less of fortune, he probably has time; he certainly has the means of religious improvement; so that, in this land of light and knowledge, especially now that universal instruction is happily become a national care, there is hardly such a thing as innocent ignorance. Even of the lowest, of the least, a strict account will be required. To plead ignorance where they might have been taught, indolence because they had little to do, and negligence, because not much was expected, is only treasuring up innumerable reasons for aggravating their condemnation.

It is remarkable that of the several characters exhibited in the parable, the least endowed was the only one punished, his neglect being every way inexcusable. A lasting and awful lesson, that no inferiority can claim exemption from the general law of duty. If the right employment of the gift is an encouragement to the poorly endowed, as being easily exercised and amply rewarded; its abuse is an awakening call to every one. For, it is not fairly deducible from this instance, that if of those whose scale in society is low, whose intellectual powers are mean, or whose fortunes are narrow; if even of such, a strict account will be required, if even in these, mere deficiency was so harshly reprobated, mere nullity was so severely punished—a sentence of most tremendous import must await those who employ rank and opulence to selfish and corrupt ends, or genius to pernicious purposes; the one debasing their own minds by sensuality, or corrupting others by examples of vice and prodigality; and the other devoting abilities so great, with profligacy so notorious, as to appear little less than 'archangel ruined,' and drawing inferior spirits into the destruction in which they have plunged themselves.

But again:—If these several talents, individually conferred, when employed to wrong purposes, or not employed at all, will be rigorously punished: what sentence have they to expect, in whom is centred the splendid confluence of God's gifts? What will be the eternal anathema pronounced on those who possessed aggregately talents, with every one of which, singly enjoyed, they might have rendered the world about them better and happier? To reflect by whom they were bestowed, to what end designed, how they have been used, and what a reckoning awaits them, form a combination of reflections too awful to be dwelt upon. From the anticipation of such complicated woe we turn with terror. The bare idea of a punishment which shall always torment and never destroy, is insupportable. Yet how many believe this without being influenced by the belief! How many, by an unaccountable delusion, refuse to conform their lives to the injunctions of the gospel, while they put their vices under the protection of its promises.

The parable informs us, that it was 'after a long time,' that the Lord required the account; so long, that the wicked think it will never come, and even the good are apt to persuade themselves that it will not come soon. Let not those however who are sitting at ease in their possessions, whether of nature or of fortune, to speak after the manner of men, fancy that the reckoning which is delayed is forgotten. The more protracted the account, the larger will be the sum total, and, of course, the more severe the requisition. All delay, indeed, is an act of mercy; but mercy neglected, or abused, will enhance punishment in proportion as it aggravates guilt.

It is obvious that the servants in the parable had been in the habit of attending to their mercies. They seem never to have been unmindful of the exact value of what had been committed to them, 'Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents.' If we do not frequently enumerate the mercies of God to us, we shall be in danger of losing sight of the Giver, while we are revelling in the gift; of neglecting the application, and forgetting the responsibility. We should recollect that his very employment of us is a high mark of favour; the use he condescends to make of us augments our debt, and whenever he puts it in our way to serve him, he lays on us a fresh obligation, and confers on us an honourable distinction.

Though he that has most, and does most, has but 'a few things,' yet his remuneration shall be immense. It is his fidelity, and not his success; his zeal in improving occasions, and not the number or greatness of the occasions, that will be rewarded. There will be an always infinite disproportion between the work he has done, and the blessing attending it.

The expostulation of the unprofitable servant presents an awful lesson against distrust in God, and fallacious views of his infinitely perfec character. The very motive this false reasoner

produces in his own vindication, is the strongest argument against him. If he '*knew*' that his lord was such a rigorous exacter, that was the very reason why he should not have given in such a negative account. 'I knew thou wast a hard master.' Could a weightier argument have been advanced for a directly different conduct? Common prudence might have taught him that, with such a master, his only security was assiduous industry. The want of love of God was at the root of this, as it is of all sin.

How many listen to the sentence of this unworthy servant! How many allow the equity of this exclusion, and yet how few, comparatively, ask, with the agitated Apostles; 'Lord, is it I?' This simple question, honestly put, and practically followed up, would render all comment vain, all exhortation superfluous. This self-application is the great end of the parable, the great end of Scripture, the great end of preaching, and the only end of hearing.

But do not too many of us, like him we are so ready to condemn, conceal our self-love under the assumption of modesty, and indulge our sloth under the humble pretence that we have no talent to exercise? But let us be assured it is the deadness of our spiritual affections, and not our mean opinion of ourselves, that is the real cause. The service of God is irksome, because his commands interfere with our self-indulgence. Let the lowly Christian possessed of but his single talent, cheer his fainting heart by that beautifully condescending plea, with which the compassionate Saviour vindicated the modest penitent, who had no other way of demonstrating her affection, but by pouring perfumes on his feet—SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD. A tenderness of encouragement, which, if we consider by whom it was uttered, and to whom addressed, must convey consolation to the heart of the most poorly endowed and self-abasing Christian.

In giving in the final account of the use we have made of our talents, we shall not only have to reckon, for the Christian knowledge we really acquired, for the progress we actually made in piety, for the good impressions we received or communicated, but for the higher degrees of all which we might have received or imparted, had we, instead of squandering our talents on inferior objects, carried them to the height of which they were susceptible. Had we acted up to our convictions, had we pushed our advantages to their possibilities, had we regularly pursued what we eagerly engaged in, had our progress kept pace with our resolution, our attainments, with our opportunities, how much more profitable servants we might have been! But satisfied to stop short of great offences, we neglect to impress upon our consciences how large a portion of our reckoning will be of a negative character.

From natural feeling, from inward consciousness, from the notices of reason, the traces of hereditary opinion, and the analogy of things, independently of Revelation, we cannot avoid the belief that we are accountable beings. Our notions of right and wrong, of equity and judgment, our insuppressible forebodings, our fearful anticipations, the suggestions of natural conscience, all unite their several forces to fasten on the mind the belief that we shall be called to a definite account. Our intelligent nature, our rational powers, our voluntary agency, make us suitable subjects of God's moral government. His wisdom, power, omniscience, rectitude and justice render him supremely fit to be our final judge, and the dispenser of our eternal awards. But God, in his infinite goodness, has not, in this most important point, left us to the bare light of unassisted nature; he has not left us to be tossed about without rudder, or compass, on the boundless ocean of harrassing conjecture. He has not abandoned us to the alternation of vain fears and unfounded hopes; to the sickly suggestions of a troubled fancy, the cruel uncertainties of doubt, and the cheerless darkness of ignorance. The expectation of a day of retribution is not the gloomy reverie of the superstitious, nor the wild vision of the enthusiastic. *He who cannot lie* has solemnly assured us, that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that Man whom he has sent, Christ Jesus.

The coming of this great day, which nature suspected, and reason allowed, Scripture confirms. It will at length arrive. The scrutiny so graphically exhibited by our Lord, will be realized in all its pomp of terrors. The sea shall give up its dead, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them, and every man shall be judged according to his works. And the dead, small and great shall stand before God, the judgment shall be set, and the books opened, and the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works.

This universal examination into the human character, this critical dissection of the heart of man, from the first created being to him who shall be caught up alive in the air at Christ's second coming, shall infallibly take place.

Blessed be Almighty forbearance, it is still in the power of every existing child of Adam to lighten to himself his apprehensions of that day. He may do more; he may convert terror into transport, by acting now as if he really believed it would one day come; by acting as he shall then wish he had acted. If 'the terrors of the Lord persuade men,' what effect should his mercy produce; that mercy which has given the universal warning to the whole human race in three consentaneous parables, exhibited with a spirit of truth more resembling historic narrative, than prophetic anticipation! There is not one living being who now reads this page from whom that day is distant; to some it must be very near; to none perhaps nearer, than to her who now tremblingly presumes to raise the warning voice; to her, to all, it is tremendously awful. Let none of us, then, content ourselves with a barren admiration of its solemnities, as if it were an affecting scene of a tragedy, invented to move the passions without rectifying them; to inspire terror, without quickening repentance. Let us not be struck by it as with a wonderful fact in history, which involves the interest of some one country with which we have no particular concern; or of some remote century disconnected with that in which our lot is

cast. It is the personal, the individual, the everlasting concern of every rational being through all the rolls of time, till time shall be no more. It is the final, unalterable decision on the fate of every intelligent, and, therefore, every accountable creature, to whom God has revealed his will; to whom he has sent his Son, to whom he has offered the aid of his Spirit.

No wonder that the universal administration of final justice shall be manifested in the most awful pomp and splendor—no wonder that it will be equally a scene of anguish and of transport; when it will, on the one hand, as much exceed the terrors of guilt, as it will, on the other, transcend the hopes of faith—when the eternal Son of the eternal Father, in the full brightness of his glory, shall be the judge; when the whole assembled universe shall be the subjects of judgment—when not only the deeds of every life, but the thoughts of every heart, shall be brought to light, when, if *we* produce our works, the recording book will produce our motives—when every saint who acted as seeing Him who is invisible, shall not only see but share the glory in which he trusted; when the hypocrite shall behold him whom he believed without trusting, and mocked without deceiving; when the profligate shall witness the reality of what he feared, and the infidel shall feel the certainty of what he denied.

CHAP. VII.

On influence, considered as a Talent.

It is at best a selfish sort of satisfaction, though the poet calls it a delightful one, *to see others tossed about in a storm, while we are sitting in security, rejoicing, not because they are in danger, but because we are safe.* Christianity instructs us to improve on the sentiment. It teaches us to extract not only comfort and gratification from the comparison of our happier lot with that of the less favoured; but in making the comparison, it reminds us to make it with reference to God, by emphatically asking, 'Who is it that maketh us to differ?'

But if we look around, not only on the external but on the moral and mental distinctions among mankind, and consider the ignorance, the miseries, and the vices of others as a ground for our more abundant gratitude; what sort of feeling will be excited in certain persons by a sight and sense of those miseries, those vices, and that ignorance, of which their own influence, or example, or neglect has been the cause? If we see any unhappy whom we might have relieved, any ignorant whom we ought to have instructed, any corrupt whose corruptions we never endeavoured to reform, but whom, perhaps, we have contributed to make what they are; in either of these cases, it is difficult to conceive any state of mind less susceptible of comfort, any circumstance more calculated to excite compunction. These instances may help men to a pretty just criterion by which to judge of their own character, since it is certain *they* never felt any true gratitude for their own mercies, who can look with indifference on either the temporal or spiritual distresses of others. And if no one ever truly mourned for his own sins who can be insensible to the sins of those around him, so no one can be earnest to promote his own salvation, who neglects any fair opening of contributing to the salvation of others.

What an appalling reflection it is, that at the tremendous bar, a being already overwhelmed with the weight of his own offences, may have to sustain the addition of the amazing and unexpected load of all those, of which he has been the cause in others! What an awful contrast will be presented to the assembled universe, when certain commanding characters shall stand forth, burdened not only with their personal guilt, nor even with the sins of their immediate connexions, but in a certain measure with the sins of their age and country; while others, who devoted similar talents and influence to opposite purposes, shall appear gloriously surrounded with happy spirits, of whose felicity they have been the instruments: their shining crowns made brighter by imparted brightness, by goodness which flourished under their auspices, by virtues which were the effect of their patronage, by piety which was the fruit of their example.

Influence is a talent not only of undefinable but of universal extent. Who is there so insignificant as not to have his own circle, greater or smaller, made better or worse, by his society, his conduct, his counsels? That presumptuous but common consolation of a dying bed, *I have done no harm to any one*, is always the fallacious refuge of such as have done little or no good. Man is no such neutral being.

It is not the design of the present considerations to insist so much on the more striking and conspicuous instances of misemployed influence, (for the ordinary state of life does not incessantly call them into action,) as on those overlooked, though not unimportant demands for its exertion, which occur in the every-day transactions of mankind, more especially among the opulent and the powerful.

Rank and fortune confer an influence the most commanding. All objects attract the more notice from being placed on an eminence, and do not excite the less attention, because they may deserve less admiration. In anticipating the scrutiny that will hereafter be made into the manner in which the rich and great have employed their influence, that powerful engine put into their hands for the noblest purposes, may we not venture to wish they had some disinterested friend, less anxious to please than to serve them, who would honestly as occasion might offer, interrogate them in a manner something like the following:—

'Allow me, as a friend to your immortal interests, to ask you a few plain questions. Has your power been uniformly employed in discouraging injustice; in promoting particular as well as general good; in countenancing religious as well as charitable institutions; in protecting the pious, as well as in assisting the indigent? Has your influence been conscientiously exerted in vindicating injured merit; has it been employed in defending insulted worth against the indolence of the unfeeling, the scorn

of the unworthy, the neglect of the unthinking? Has it been exercised in patronizing modest genius, which would, without your fostering hand, have sunk in obscurity?

'Have you, in the recommendations which have been required of you, had an eye to the suitableness of the candidate for the place, rather than to a provision for an unworthy applicant, to the injury of the office? And have you honestly preferred the imperative claims of the institution to the solicitations, or even to the wants, of the individual? Have you never loaded a public, or injured a private establishment, by appointing an unfit agent, because he was a burden on your own hands, or a charge on your own purse? Have you never promoted a servant who had "wasted your goods," and with whom you parted for that very reason, to the superintendance of a charity, or to the management of an office, where you knew he would have a wider sphere, and a more uncontrolled power, of purloining public property, or wasting private bounty, than in that from which your prudence had discharged him?'

To rise a step higher:—'Have you never, if intrusted with a patronage over that peculiarly sacred office, "which any one may well tremble to give or to receive," been governed by a spirit of nepotism in the disposal of it, which you perhaps severely censure under a certain other establishment most obviously corrupt? Have you never been engaged in promoting men, who, from their destitution of principle, are a dishonour to the profession in which you have been raising them, or, by the want of abilities are disqualified for it? Have you never connived at the preferment of the weak or wicked, to the exclusion of others whose virtues and talents eminently fitted them for the situation? Or, have you, rather, strenuously laboured to fix the meritorious in the place they were so qualified to fill, while you supplied the wants of the undeserving or incompetent relative out of your own purse? And have you habitually made a conscience of recommending adequate persons in preference to the unworthy and the unfit, though the latter belonged to your own little senate, or swelled your own large train?

'Have you habitually borne in mind that important, but disregarded, maxim, that what you do by another is done by yourself; and not only carefully avoided oppression in your own person, but, rising superior to that selfish indolence, the bane, the grave of every nobler quality, have you been careful that your agents do not exercise a tyranny which you yourself abhor, but which may be carried on under your name? Your ignorance of such injustice will be of little avail, if, through supineness, you have sanctioned abuses which vigilance might have prevented, or exertion punished.

'Have you unkindly denied access to your presence to the diffident solicitor, who has no other channel to preferment but your favour; and if not able to serve him, have you softened your refusal by feelingly participating in his disappointment, instead of aggravating it by refusing to see and soothe him, when you could do no more? Have you considered that, to listen to wearisome applications, and pertinacious claims, is among the drawbacks of comfort necessarily appended to your station? To examine into interfering pretensions, while it is a duty you owe to the applicant, is a salutary exercise of patience to yourself; it is also the only certain means you possess of distinguishing the meritorious from the importunate.'

We dwell on this part of the subject the more earnestly, because it is to be feared that even the tender-hearted and the benevolent, from the facility of a yielding temper, from weariness of importunity, from a wish to spare their own feelings, as well as from a too natural desire to get rid of trouble, are frequently induced to confer and to refuse favours, not only against their principles and their judgment, but against their will. Yet as no virtue is ever possessed in perfection by him who is destitute of its opposite.—Have you been equally careful, never, for the sake of popularity or the love of ease, to awaken false hopes, and keep alive false expectations in your retainers, though you knew you had no prospect of ever making them good?—thus committing your own honour for the sake of swelling the catalogue of your dependents; and, by insincerity and indecision, feeding them with delusive promises, when a firm negative, by extinguishing hope, might have put them on a more successful pursuit.

Some striking instances of delicate liberality, recorded of a late lamented statesman, have shown, that it is not too much to expect from human nature, that a man should exert his influence for the benefit of another, even though it were to his own disadvantage, and that he should be not only willing, but desirous, not to procure for himself the gratitude of the obliged person, nor to obtain his admiration; but would be contented, that, while he himself afforded all the benefit, an intervening agent should have all the credit. This disinterestedness is among the nicer criteria of a Christian spirit.

While we can with truth assign the most liberal praise to that spirit of charity which preeminently distinguishes the present period, we are compelled to lament that justice is not held in equal estimation by some of those who give the law to manners. This considerably diminishes their influence, because it is the quality which, of all others, they most severely require in their dependents, as being that which is most immediately connected with their own interest. And how far from equitable is it, to blame and punish the statuable offence in petty men, whose breach of integrity is unhappily facilitated by continual opportunity, or induced by the pressure of want, while the rigorous exacter of justice is as defective in the practice, as he is strict in the requisition?

The species of injustice alluded to, consists much in that laxity of principle which admits of a scale of expense disproportionate to the fortune: this creates the inevitable necessity of remaining in heavy arrears to those who can ill afford to give long credit: in return, it induces in the creditor the habit, and almost the necessity, of enhancing the price of his commodity. The evil would be little, if the encroachment were only felt by those whose tardy payment renders exorbitance almost pardonable:

but others, who practise the most exact justice, are involved in the penalty, without partaking in the offence: and the correct are taxed for the improbity of the dilatory. This dilapidating habit leads to an indolence in inspecting accounts; and the increasing unwillingness to examine into debts, increases the inability to discharge them; for debts, like sins, become more burdensome in proportion as people neglect to inquire into them.—Perhaps there is no instance of misconduct which tends more directly to diminish influence than the imprudence of contracting debts, and the irregularity and consequent injustice of which it is sometimes unintentionally the cause.

And here, if we might be allowed a remark somewhat foreign to our immediate subject, it may be observed, that the low conception of justice of which we complain has infected not only morals, but religion; or rather, what began in our principle towards God, extends to our practice towards man. It is the attribute of which we make the least scruple to rob the Almighty; for it is a fashionable, though covert, mode of arraigning his justice, when we affect to exalt his character by representing him as too merciful to punish. Justice is not only eminently conspicuous in her own central station, but gives life and light to other attributes. By cutting off superfluous expenses, temperance and sobriety grows out of justice; and, what is subtracted from luxury, is carried over without additional expense, to the account of beneficence.

The Holy Scriptures lay down some precise and indispensable rules for the practice of justice, while they leave great latitude, at least as to the selection of its individual acts, to charity. Justice can be maintained only by this distinct demand and rigid acquiescence, while charity would lose the nature and quality of benevolence, if it were under any such express and definite rules. Charity may choose her object, but those of justice are chosen for her. It was, doubtless, in mercy, that no absolute rule or limitation is made respecting charity, that we might have the gratification of a voluntary delight in its exercise, for our nature is, in this respect, so kindly constituted, that, in minds not peculiarly ill-formed, the call to beneficence is the call to enjoyment.

But to return.—The influence of the great, 'the observed of all observers,' descends into the social walks of life. The pinnacle on which they stand, makes their most trivial actions, and even words, objects of attention and imitation to those beneath them. The consciousness of this should be an additional motive for avoiding, in their ordinary conversation, not only what is corrupt, but whatever savours of levity and imprudence; the vanity of the little world is ready, not from mischief, but self-importance, to convert the thoughtless slips of the great into consequence; their most frivolous remarks are quoted, merely that the quoter may seize the only occasion he could ever find of showing that he has been admitted to their company. This harmless little stratagem holds out a strong motive for those whose condition in life makes them subjects of observation, occasionally to let fall something that may be remembered, not merely because they said it, but because it was worth saying. This remark applies to superiority of talents, to be considered in our next head, still more than of rank.

As the great and noble are sufficiently disposed to look with reverted eye back to their ancestral honours, it were to be wished that they were all as ready, as we are happy to say some of them are, to cast the same careful retrospect to the ancient usages of their illustrious houses. There was a time when family devotion was considered as a kind of natural appendage to high rank, when domestic worship was almost as inseparably connected with the aristocracy as the church with the state. The chapel was as much a part of the splendid establishment as the state-room. When the form of piety was thus kept up, the reality was more likely to exist. Even the appearance was a homage to religion, the very custom was an honourable recognition of Christianity. But, in the way of influence, it must have been of high importance; the domestics would have their sense of duty kept alive, and would with more alacrity serve those who they saw served God. It was a bond of political, as well as of moral union; it was the only occasion on which 'the rich and poor meet together.' There is something of a coalescing property in social worship. In acknowledging their common dependance on their common master, this equality of half an hour would be likely to promote subordination through the rest of the day. Take it in an inferior point of view, it was a useful discipline, it was a family muster-roll, a sort of domestic parade, which regularly brought the privates before their commanding officers, and maintained order as well as detected absence. It was also calculated to promote the interests of the superiors, by periodically reminding their dependants of their duty to God, which necessarily involves every human obligation.

We come now to speak, though cursorily, of another deposit of talent, not less extensive in its immediate effects and far more important in its consequences; the influence of Genius and Learning. As the influence of well-directed talents is too obvious to require animadversion, we shall confine our brief remarks to their contrary direction.—If we could suppose the man whose talents had, by pernicious principles, been diverted from their right channel, to have, at the close of life, that clear view of his own character, and the misapplication of his mental powers, which will be presented to him when he opens his eyes on eternity, we should witness as complete a contrast with his present feelings as any two opposite descriptions of character could exhibit.

Of all the various sentences to be awarded at the dread tribunal, can imagination figure one more severe than will be pronounced against the polluted and polluting wit; the noblest faculties turned into arms against him who gave them, the eloquence which would scarcely have disparaged the tongue of angels, converted to the rhetoric of hell? The mischief of a corrupt book is indefinite, both in extent and duration.—When the personal example of the writer has done its worst, and has only ruined his

friends and neighbours, the operation of an unprincipled work may be just beginning.—It is a sin, the commission of which carries in it more of the character of its infernal inspirer than any other. It is a crime not prompted by appetite, kindled by passion, or provoked by temptation: but a gratuitous, voluntary, cold blooded enormity, the offspring of intellectual wickedness, the child of spiritual depravity; the deepest sin without the slightest excuse. Sins of surprise have infirmity to plead, but, in this frigid villany, the badness of the motive keeps pace with the turpitude of the act. The *intention* is to offend God, the *project* is to ruin man; the *aim* is to poison the temporal peace, the *design* is to murder the everlasting hope of all who come in contact with it.

But the exclusive application of talents to subjects perfectly unexceptionable, and right and valuable, as far as they go, is sometimes an occasion in which we might mingle regret with admiration. We view with reverence the profound scholar, a man, so far from having lost any time in trifling, whose very amusements are labours, and whose relaxation is intensity of thought, and sedulity of study. By unremitting diligence, he has been daily adding fresh stores to his ponderous mass of erudition, or periodically presenting new tomes to the literary world, in return for those he has rifled. But, put the case, that such a man has never so much as conceived the thought of lending to religion his weight of character, or the influence of his reputation, by devoting some little interval to a moral or religious speculation; has never once entertained the idea of occasionally directing his treasures of learning, into any channel which leads to the country where he and his volumes together, the durable register of his life, are soon about to land,—who can forbear, in the contemplation of such a possible character, regretting that his too moderate ambition should be satisfied with the applause of an age or an island, without once exercising his talents on some topic which might have included the concerns of his whole species, which might have embraced the interests of both worlds? Who can forbear lamenting, that he has risen so high without reflecting that, in a moral sense, 'one step higher would set him highest;' that he should have been contented with the idolatrous worship of some pagan sage as editor or annotator; and, for that humble meed, to relinquish the duty of glorifying his Maker, by instructing his fellow-creatures; as if that were a less splendid object, an inferior concern to be turned over to inferior abilities, and to which inferior abilities, were adequate?

If the awful apprehension of a future account could, at the close of life, lead even the illustrious Grotius, who had with equal ability cultivated both secular and sacred studies, to wish that he could change characters with a poor pious peasant, who used to spend most of his time in reading the Bible at his gate, what may finally be the wish of those who, having quitted a far less useful life without any such contrite confession, are brought to *witness* at once the retribution assigned to the conscientious use of one solitary talent, and to *feel* that awarded to their own vast but abused allotment? That awakening parable of the Divine Teacher which presents so terrible a view of the 'great gulf' which irrevocably separated to other neighbours, whose respective lots in worldly circumstances resembled the distinctions of intellect in the preceding instance—that 'gulf' which eternally divided the holy beggar from the opulent sensualist—is equally applicable to the present case. If any thing could deepen or widen a barrier already hopelessly impassable, might it not be the substitution of ill-applied abilities for misemployed riches?*

An affecting thought involuntarily forces itself upon us, on the departure of distinguished genius. All those shining talents which had hitherto too exclusively filled our minds, sink at once in our estimation, because we know they are now nothing to their possessor but as they were used, worse than nothing if they were not used wisely.—In the court where he now stands for trial, neither the cogent argument nor the pointed wit can secure his acquittal; happy if they appear not strong evidences against it. The qualities of his heart, which, perhaps, dazzled by those of his head, we had not taken into the account—his errors having been lost in his brightness—now come forward as the others recede. Our feelings are solely occupied with what may be now available to him to whom we have owed pleasure or information. That fame which we lately thought so solid a good, seems now a painted cloud melting into air—that proud FOR EVER for which he wrote, seems dwindled to a point—that visionary immortality which he had assigned as his meed, compared with the eternity on which he has entered, is become less than the shadow to the substance, less than the halo to the sun.

This idea strikes the mind with peculiar force upon the recent decease of two writers of uncommon reach of thought, profound research, and unbounded philological learning. Had these two eminent men been possessed of inferior minds, or a more dubious fame, their death would have sounded the signal of silence, no less to the moralist than to the satirist, as to the gross sensuality and corrupt principles of the one, the avowed atheism and profligate political doctrines of the other. As it is, we cannot but refer to them, though with feelings of pungent regret, and only under a strong sense of the atonement which such examples owe to the world for the mischief they do it, as a melancholy illustration of some of the preceding remarks. It is to be feared that the unmixed commendation of their talents and erudition, without the gentlest censure of their principles and practices, with which some of our journals abounded on the loss of these able but unhappy men, might tend to impress the ardent youthful student with an over-valuation of genius, unsanctified by Christian principles, of erudition undignified by virtuous conduct.

Far, very far, from my heart be the ungenerous thought of treating departed eminence with disrespect, but in analyzing striking characters, is it not a duty to separate 'the

* Let no one apply this to the great statesman of Holland.

precious from the vile,' lest unqualified admiration, where there is such large room for censure, should, while profusely embalming the dead, allure the ingenuous living to an imitation as unlimited as the panegyric was undistinguishing?*

CHAP. VIII.

On time, considered as a Talent.

If we already begin to feel what a large portion of life we have improvidently squandered—what days and nights have been suffered to waste themselves, if not criminally, yet inconsiderately: if not loaded with evil, yet destitute of good—how much time has been consumed in worthless employments, frivolous amusements, listless indolence, idle reading, and vain imaginations—if things already begin to appear wrong, which we once thought at least harmless, though not perhaps useful—what appearance will they assume in that inevitable hour when all things will be seen in their true light, and appreciated according to their intrinsic value? We shall then feel in its full force how often we neglected what we knew to be our duty, shunned what we were aware was our interest, and declined what we yet believed would add to our happiness; while, with perverted energy, we eagerly pursued what we had reason to think was contrary to our interest, duty and happiness. But excuses satisfy us now, to which we shall not then give the hearing for a moment. The thin disguise which the illusion of the senses now casts over vanity, sloth, and error, will then be as little efficient as consolatory.

He who carefully governs his mind will conscientiously regulate his time. To him who thus accurately distributes it, who appropriates the hour to its due employment, life will never seem tedious, yet counted by this moral arithmetic it will be really long. If we compute our time as critically as our other possessions; if we assign its proportions to its duties, though the divisions will then be so fully occupied that they will never drag, yet the aggregate sum will be found sufficiently long for all the purposes to which life is destined.

It is not a little absurd that they who most wish to abolish time would be the least willing to abridge life. But is it not unreasonable to endeavour to annihilate the parcels of which life is composed, and at the same time to have a dread of shrinking the stock? They who most pathetically lament the want of time, are either persons who plunge themselves into unnecessary concerns, or those who manage them ill, or those who do nothing. The first create the deficiency they deplore; the second do not so much want time as arrangement; the last, like brute animals laden with gold, groan under the weight of a treasure of which they make no use, and do not know the value.

They will never make a right use of time who turn it over to chance, who live without any definite scheme for its employment, or any fixed object for its end. Such desultory beings will be carried away by every trifle that strikes the senses, or any whim that seizes the imagination. They who live without any ultimate point in view, can have no regular process in the steps which lead to it.

But though in order to prevent confusion, to animate torpor, and tame irregularity, it is always a duty to form a plan; occasions will arise when it may be a higher duty to break it. Both ourselves and our plans must ever be kept subject to the will of a higher power. That is an ill-regulated mind which wears life away without any settled scheme of action: that is a little mind which makes itself a slave to any preconceived rule, when a more imperative duty may arise to demand its infraction. Providence may call us to some work during the day which we did not foresee in the morning. Even a good design must be relinquished to make way for a better, nor must we sacrifice a useful to a favourite project, nor must we scruple to renounce our inclinations at the call of duty or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful doer as well as a 'cheerful giver.'

In our use of time we frequently practise a delusion which cheats us of no inconsiderable portion of its actual enjoyment. The *now* escapes us while we are settling future points not only of business, of ease, or of pleasure, but of benevolence, of generosity, of piety. These imaginary points to which we impatiently stretch forward in idea, we fix at successive but distant intervals, endeavouring by the rapid march of a hurrying imagination to annihilate the intervening spaces. One great evil of reckoning too absolutely on marked periods which may never arrive, is, that, by this absorption of the mind, we neglect present duties in the anticipation of events not only remote but uncertain. Even if the anticipated period does arrive, it is not always applied to the purpose to which it was pledged; and the event which was to feel the full weight of our interference and commanding influence, when it has taken place, sinks into the undistinguished mass of time and circumstances. The point which we once thought, if it ever could be attained, would supply abundant matter, not only for present duty or pleasure, but for delightful retrospection, loses itself, as we mingle with it, in the common heap of forgotten things; and as we recede from it, merges in the dim obscure of faded recollections. Having arrived at the era, instead of seizing on that *present* so impatiently desired while it was *future*, we again send our imaginations out to fresh distances in search of fresh deceits. While we are pushing it on to objects still more remote, the large uncalculated spaces of comfort and peace, or of languor and discontent, which fill the chasm, and which we scarcely think worth taking into the account, make up far the greater part of life.

All this would be only foolish, and would hardly deserve a harsher name, if these large uncultivated wastes, these barren interstices, these neglected subdivisions, had not all of

* To prevent any mistaken application of these remarks it may be proper to avow that Professor Porson and Mr. Horne Tooke are the persons to whom they allude.

them imperious demands of their own—if they were not to be as rigorously accounted for, as the vivid spots and shining prospects which promise so much and produce so little.

Let us not then compute time by particular periods or signal events. Let us not content ourselves with putting our festal days only into the calendar, but remember that from the hour when reason begins to operate, to the hour in which it shall be extinguished, every particle of time is valuable; that no day can be insignificant, when every day is to be accounted for; that each one possesses weight and importance, because of each the retribution is to be received. In the prospect therefore of our coming time, let us not make great leaps from the expectation to the occurrence; but bearing in mind that small concerns make up the larger share of life, let us aim to execute well those which lie more immediately before us. For the instant occasion we have life and time in hand, for that which is prospective, we may no longer be in possession of either: and it is an argument of no small cogency, that he who devotes time to its best purposes, secures eternity for its best enjoyments.

But we are guilty of the strange inconsistency of being most prodigal of what we best love, and of throwing away what we most fear to lose, that time of which life is made up. If God does not give us a short time, we can contrive to make it short by this wretched husbandry. It is not so much indigence of time as a prodigality in the waste of it, that prevents life from answering all the ends for which it is given. Few things make us so independent of the world as the prudent disposition of this precious article. It delivers people from hanging on the charity of others to emancipate them from the slavery of their own company. We should not only be careful not to waste our own time, but that others do not rob us of it.—The distinction of crime between 'stealing our purse' and 'stealing our good name' has been beautifully contrasted. That the purse is 'trash' is a sentiment echoed by many who yet set no small value on the trash so liberally condemned; while the waster of his own, or the pilferer of another's time, escapes a censure which he ought more heavily to incur. It is a felony for which no repentance can make restitution, the commodity being not only invaluable but irrecoverable.

Considerable evil, with respect to the economy of time, arises from an error which infects some minds of a superior cast—a notion that contempt of order and custom are indications of genius, that great minds cannot be tied to times, nor enslaved by seasons. They value themselves on being systematic only in their disdain of method, on being regular in nothing but irregularity; with them accident gives the law to action. They pride themselves in not despatching business but postponing it, and this in order to show with what ability they can retrieve time to which they are always in arrears. From this vanity of intimating that they can execute in hours what costs slower souls days or weeks, the most pressing business is deferred to some indefinite period, and duties thus postponed are not seldom omitted.

The same confidence in his own powers which leads a young man of genius to believe he can catch knowledge by intuition, see every thing at a glance, and comprehend every thing in a moment, tempts him to put off that moment. But if such wonders are really to be achieved without the old ingredients, time and study, what might he not expect would be accomplished with their assistance. Those who are now marvels would then be miracles! The too common consequence of this impatience of application, is to affect to despise whatever knowledge requires time to attain, and to consider whatever demands industry to acquire, as not worth acquiring.

Nor is this error monopolized by talents. We have known some, who, having no other evidence of genius to produce, never failed to be unpunctual. It is a wonder that the more intellectual, seeing their province thus invaded by dunces, do not become regular through mere contempt of their imitators, and abandon the abuse of time to those who know not how to spend it wisely.

Christianity is a social principle. He who has discovered the use of time, and consequently the value of eternity, cannot but be solicitous for the spiritual good of his fellow-creatures. The one, indeed, is indicative of the other. But this good, like every other, is not without its dangers. We cannot essentially benefit people without associating with them, without rendering ourselves agreeable to them. But in so doing we should ever recollect that we may seek to please till we forget to serve them, we may soften strong truths to render them more palatable till we come gradually less to recommend *them*, than ourselves. In the spirit of friendly accommodation we may insensibly lower the standard of religion, with a view to make ourselves more agreeable, and may deceive in order to conciliate.

Or we may fall into another error. We may begin at the wrong end. We may censure the wrong practice without any reference to the principle, or we may suit our counsels, not to the wants, but to the taste, of our friend. In our endeavours to promote the good of others, we should be careful to find out the points in which they are most deficient. If their error be ignorance of Scripture, if worldliness, if prejudice, if a general disinclination to seriousness, if a blind respect for religion, joined to an unacquaintedness with its doctrines; in each case, a very different mode of conduct will be requisite. In each, in all, we should, indeed, with the utmost fairness, lay open the whole scheme of Christianity, neither concealing its difficulties, its humbling requisitions, nor the self-denials it imposes. But at the same time, if we suspect any one truth to be particularly revolting to them, it will be more prudent to approach this truth gradually through others, from which they are less averse, than, by forcing its introduction at the outset, shut up the way to farther progress. Every doctrine should be unfolded gradually, judiciously, temperately, not insisting on any points that are not clearly scriptural, nor on any that admit of doubtful disputation, nor on many points at a time; and, above all, on none unseasonably, or unceasingly.

This habit of turning time to account, by endeavouring to be useful to others, will, if conducted with mildness, and exercised with Christian humility, be eminently beneficial to ourselves. It will set us on a closer examination of the truths we suggest; and in contending with blindness and self-sufficiency, we shall find a wholesome exercise for our own patience and moderation. It may remind us, that we were once, perhaps in the same state. Above all, it will put us on a more strict watchfulness over our own hearts and lives, lest we should be adopting one set of principles for our conversation, and another for our conduct. It will induce the necessity of a more exact consistency, as they, to whom we are counsellors, will not be backward, if we furnish them with the least ground, to be our censurers.

And here I would affectionately suggest to my numerous amiable young friends, the benefit to be derived to their own minds from turning a certain portion of their time to the personal instruction of the poor, for which so wide a field is just now providentially opened. In communicating the elements of religious knowledge—in numberless repetitions of the same plain truths—in being obliged to begin again the simple document which they fancied they had long ago impressed—in the humbling necessity of lowering their ideas, and debasing their language, in order to make themselves intelligible—in the forbearance which dulness of intellect, perverseness of temper, and ingratitude demand, they may gain some proficiency themselves, even where their success with others is least encouraging.

But to whatever account we turn our time with respect to others, the first object of its right employment is with ourselves; and this not only in discharging those exercises of piety and virtue, which are too obvious and too generally acknowledged, to require to be specified; but, in attending to the secret dispositions of the mind, in order to ascertain its real character. We do not mean to imply that we can judge of its state by the thoughts which are necessarily suggested by any actual business, or any pressing object, such thoughts being the proper demand of the occasion, and not any certain indication of our abiding state and habitual temper.—But by watching the nature and tendency of our spontaneous thoughts, we may, in a great measure, determine on the character of our minds; their voluntary thoughts and unprompted feelings, being the streams which indicate the fountain whence they flow.—The heart is that perennial spring; for, whether grace or nature supply the current, the fountain is inexhaustible. In either case, the more abundantly it flows, the more constantly its waste is fed by fresh supplies; expense, instead of exhausting, augments the stream, whether the source from earth supply worldly thoughts, or that from above such as are heavenly. Thoughts determine on the character: *as the man thinketh so is he.*

What a scene will open upon us, when, from our eternal state, we shall look back on the use we have made of time! What a revolution will be wrought in our opinions! What a contrast will be exhibited, when we shall take a clear retrospect of all we have done, and all we ought to have done! And shall we, then, put off the inspection to an uncertain period, to a period, when we can neither repent to any purpose for what was wrong, nor begin to do what we shall then perceive would have been right? Let these frequent meditations on death, lead us to reflect what the feelings of a dying bed will be. Let us think now what will then be the review of riches mis-spent, of talents neglected or perverted, of influence abused, of learning misapplied, of time misemployed! To entertain serious thoughts of death now, is the most likely method for rectifying tempers, for conquering propensities, for establishing principles, for confirming habits, of which we shall then feel the consequences; for relinquishing enterprises and pursuits, for the success of which we may then be as much afflicted, as we should now be at their defeat.

He who cannot find time to consult his Bible, will find, one day, that he has time to be sick; he who has no time to pray, must find time to die. He who can find no time to reflect, is most likely to find time to sin; he who cannot find time for repentance, will find an eternity in which repentance will be of no avail. Let us, then, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, seriously reflect, under what law we came into the world: 'it is appointed for all men once to *die*, and, after death, the JUDGMENT.' Is it not obvious, then, that the design of life is to prepare for judgment; and that, in proportion as we employ time well, we make immortality happy?

CHAP. IX.

On Charity.

In that general use of the talents, suggested in the parable, there is also a particular vocation on the exercise of which, every man must equitably determine. Each is particularly called upon to acquit himself of that more immediate duty, for the practice of which, God has given special endowments and opportunity. Our Maker requires the specific exercise of the specific talent. The nature of the gift points out the nature of the requisition. The use of endowment is a peculiar debt, a marked obligation. This is not a gift confounded with the mass of his gifts, but one by which God designs to be, by that individual, more remarkably glorified.

But *charity* is a virtue of all times and all places. It is not so much an independent grace in itself, as an energy, which gives the last touch and highest finish to every other, and resolves them all into one common principle. It is called 'the very bond of perfectness,' not only because it unites us to God, our ultimate perfection, but because it ties all the other virtues together, and refers them thus concatenated, to Him, their common source and centre.

St. Peter having given a pressing exhortation to many exalted duties, finishes by ascribing to charity this emphatical superiority; '*Above all things*, have fervent charity.' It is, indeed, the prolific principle of all duty: a confluence of.

every thing that is lovely and amiable: the fountain from which all excellences flow, the stream in which they all meet. It is not subject to the ebb and flow of passion or partiality —it is true christian sympathy. It is tender without weakness; it does not arise from that constitutional softness which may be rather infirmity than virtue. It is the affection of the Gospel; a love derived from the Spirit of Christ, and reciprocally communicated among his genuine followers.

Charity comprehends an indefinitely wide sphere, both in feeling and doing. According to the arrangement of St. Paul, in his beautiful personification of this grace,* she may be said to embrace almost the whole scheme of religious, personal, and social duty. 'Patient and kind,' she does not wait to be solicited to acts of benignity, she seizes the occasion—she does more, she watches for it. She 'endures' evils, but inflicts none; she does not select her trials, but 'bears all things.' Though 'she believes all things,' yet she exercises her hope without relinquishing her prudence; sometimes, where conviction forbids her thinking favourably, even then it does not prevent 'her hoping all things.' She subdues 'vaunting,' conquers the swellings of insolence, and the intractableness of pride. Not only 'she envieth not,' not only she disallows the injustice of desiring what is another's, but by a noble disdain of selfishness, she even 'seeketh not her own.' Her disinterestedness stirs her up to the perpetual rooting out that principle wrought by nature into the constitution of the soul. So far from thinking it a proof of spirit to resent injuries, she is not 'easily provoked' by them. She smooths the fierceness of the irrascible, and corrects the acrimony of the evil-tempered. She not only does not perpetrate, but 'she thinketh no evil.' She has found a shorter way of becoming rich than avarice ever invented, for charity makes another's goods her own by a simple process; without dispossessing the proprietor, she rejoices so much in another's prosperity that it becomes hers, because it is his.

Here we see that the Apostle places charity not only before all the virtues which he thus gracefully marshals, before qualities the most moral, gifts the most spiritual, attainments the most intellectual, but he actually degrades these last in the comparison; he does not barely lower their value, he annihilates it. Without this principle of life, this soul of duty, this essence of goodness, they are not only little, they are nothing. Without charity, possessions, talents, exertions are all fruitless. They are of no value in the sight of God: they are of no efficacy to our salvation. Charity alone sanctifies our offerings, recommends our prayers, and makes our very praises acceptable.

And though nothing is formally efficacious but the blood and merits of Christ, yet charity, as a divine grace, and one that will never cease, shows that our interest in him, and union with him, are real and genuine.

But to descend to the particulars of charity, and apply the different branches of it to the common purposes of life.—Whenever we are promoting the good of mankind, either by assisting public institutions, or relieving individuals, we are obviously helping on the cause of charity; and, when we cannot effectively assist the work, we may exercise the principle; we may pray for the happiness which we cannot confer, and rejoice in every addition to the general good towards which we cannot contribute. On the other hand, the purse may sometimes be open where the heart is shut. And it is perhaps a more rare and a higher virtue to exercise forbearance towards the faults and to put a candid construction on the actions of others, than to supply their wants, or promote their temporal interests. But whether candour in judging or liberality in giving, be the virtue in exercise, by the adoption of each as a law, and the practice of both on the ground of conformity to the Divine will, we shall acquire such a habit of exercising the kind affections, that what was adopted as a principle will be established into a pleasure; what was a force upon nature, will almost grow into a part of it; obligation will become choice, law impulse, duty necessity; the energy will become so powerful, that the heart will involuntarily spring to the performance; indolence, selfishness, trouble, inconvenience, will vanish under the vigorous operation of a habit whose motive is genuine Christianity.

One Christian grace is never exercised at the expense of another, nor is it perfect, unless it promotes that other. This charity enjoys abstinently that she may give liberally. While she restrains every wrong inclination, she stimulates us to such as are right. She is never a solitary quality, but is inseparably linked with truth and equity. She leads us perpetually to examine our means, dispositions, and opportunities, and to exert their combined force for the promotion of the greatest possible good. She teaches us to contribute to the comfort of others as well as to their necessities. She converts small kindnesses into great ones, by doing them with reference to God; for it is not so much the worth, as the temper, which will render them acceptable to Him.

We must not judge of our charity by single acts and particular instances, for they are not always good men who do good things, but by our general tendencies and propensities. We must strive after an uniformity in our charity—examine whether it be equable, steady, voluntary, and not a charity of times, and seasons, and humours. If we are as unkind and illiberal in one instance, as we are profuse in another, when the demand is equal, and we have both the choice and the means, whatever we may be, we are not charitable.

Though charity, as we have already observed, is a quality of universal application, and by no means limited within the narrow bounds of alms-giving, yet, not to allow a due, that is, a high rank and station to those works of benevolence, to which our Redeemer gives so conspicuous a place in his exhibition of the scrutiny at the general judgment, would be mistaking the genius of Christianity, would be departing from the practice and the principles of its Founder; it would be forgetting the high dig-

* First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xiii.

nity he conferred on this grace, when he declared that he should consider the smallest work of love done to the least of his followers for his sake as done to himself.

This pecuniary charity is not to be limited to our particular connexions—must not be confined to unfounded attachments, to party-favourites. It must be governed by the law of justice. We must not do a little good to one which may involve a greater injury to another: yet though we should keep our heart always open, and our feelings alive to the general benefit, still, as our power must be inevitably contracted, whatever right others may have to our beneficence, local circumstances, natural expectations, and pressing necessity, confer the more immediate claim. The *most* immediate is that of 'the household of faith.'

From hence it appears, that in inquiring into the duties of charity, we must overlook the use to be made of riches, one of the talents implied in the parable. The application of money, whether 'kept by its owners to their hurt,' or squandered to their destruction, will equally be made the subject of final investigation. Lord Bacon's remark, that 'riches, when kept in a heap, are corrupt like a dunghill, but when spread abroad, diffuse beauty and fertility,' has been more admired than acted upon. All the fine sentences that have been pelted at the head of covetousness have probably never reformed one miser; nor have the most pointed aphorisms, not divinely directed, ever taught the luxurious the true use of money. Happily the age in which we live is so generally disposed to acts of beneficence, that there never was a period which less imposed the necessity to press the duty, to enforce the practice, or to point out the objects. A thousand new channels are opened, yet the old ones are not dried up; the streams flow in abundance, as if fed by a perennial fountain.

Let not any one, however, intrench himself in the supposed security of surrounding goodness. Let not any take comfort that he lives in an age of charity, if he himself is not charitable. We are not benevolent by contact or infection, or by breathing an atmosphere of charity. Yet who has not heard persons exultingly boast of this noble characteristic of the age, who are by no means remarkable for contributing their own contingent towards establishing its character? Probably many a man gloried in the valour of his country, and exulted in the pride of being an Englishman, after the battles of Trafalgar and Salamanca, who, had he been sent into the action would have been shot for cowardice.

Who has not seen the ready eye discharge its kindly showers at a tale of woe, and the frugal sentimentalist comfort himself that his tears had paid more cheaply the debt of benevolence, for which his purse had been solicited. The Author, many years ago, made one in a party of friends: an expected guest, who was rather late, at length came in; she was in great agitation, having been detained on the road by a dreadful fire in the neighbourhood. The poor family, who were gone to bed, had been with difficulty awakened. The mother had escaped by throwing herself from a two pair of stairs window into the street. She then recollected, that in her extreme terror, she had left her child behind in bed. To the astonishment of all present, she rushed back through the flames and to the general joy, soon appeared with the child alive in her arms. While she was expressing her gratitude, the light of the lamps fell on its face, and she perceived, to her inexpressible horror, that she had saved the child of another woman—her own had perished. It may be imagined what were the feelings of the company. A subscription was instantly begun. Almost every one had liberally contributed, when a nobleman, who could have bought the whole party, turning to the writer of these pages, said, 'Madam, I will give you,' every expecting eye was turned to the peer, knowing him to be unused to the giving mood, the person addressed joyfully held out her hand, but drew it back on his coolly saying, 'I will give you this affecting incident for the subject of your next tragedy.' Some will read this passage who were present on the occasion.

But since neither the logic nor the rhetoric of the writer, were she so happy as to possess either, is likely to make the 'churl liberal,' or to stir up the vain or the voluptuous to a beneficence which shall bear any fair proportion to the costly maintenance of their luxury or their vanity, the slight observations which follow shall be addressed to the bountiful giver, a character, blessed be God as common as it is amiable. 'To the act it is unnecessary to excite him; to the motive he cannot too carefully look. This is the more requisite, as, in an age in which more excellent charity sermons are annually preached than ever were delivered since the establishment of Christianity—that which alone, of all the religions in the world, ever made charitable foundations a part of its institution—we now and then meet with one which seems to invert the principle, and to put the point for the base. It is with diffidence we put the question, dreading to be suspected of indulging a spirit of censure where we would wish to offer unqualified commendation; but do we not now and then hear assigned to almsgiving, nay assigned to the individual contribution for which the well intentioned preacher is eloquently pleading, a merit so vast, that it would seem to supply the absence of all other merits; a merit which would almost induce one to believe that a more than ordinary contribution to the plate would prove a golden key, to stand in *his* stead, who 'has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers?'

To explain my meaning by an example:—In the temple of *Him* who gave his Son to die, to atone for the sins of the world, I once heard, and from no mean authority, Charity called *the atoning virtue of the age.* To have termed it the prevailing, the distinguishing, the most amiable characteristic of the age, had been right and true. But when I found it thus gravely proposed as an expiation for sin, I was ready to imagine that I heard the exclamation of St. Paul to his Galatians—'I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you unto the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.'

We must readily not only allow for, but ad-

mire, the ardour of an animated preacher, who, feeling his heart expand with his subject, finds it as much his delight as his duty to impart to every bosom the tender and compassionate sympathies with which his own overflows; and it is with reluctance we have presumed to intimate the restraints, which christian piety should impose on itself in not overstating even a christian duty.

We have no right to determine on the proportions and possibility of any man's charity, but on the principle we may determine; there must be an exhaustless spring in the heart, even where the Christian's means will not admit of a perpetual current. Love is in fact that motive principle, without which neither faith, nor mysteries, nor martyrdom, no nor even the addition of the second guinea to the plate, where only one had been intended, nor giving all our goods to the poor, will profit any thing. Where this vital spirit is wanting, the most ample bounty will not reach its end; where it exists, 'the cup of cold water,' shall be accepted. Without this animating principle, though the bounty may obtain applause, may influence others, may do good, and promote good, yet it may unhappily fall short of promoting the spiritual interests of the giver. He who has promised to render to every man according to his deeds, knows the principle of the deed, and has never promised to recompense any which has no reference to himself.

To neglect works of charity, not to be largely liberal in the performance of them according to our ability, is an infallible evidence that our professions of piety mean nothing. On the other hand, to depend upon them as what is to bear us out in our claims for heaven, before the tribunal of God, is to offend our Maker and deceive our own souls. We would be the very last to undervalue, or to discourage charity, but is it discouraging it to place it on its true ground; to assert that we may build an hospital without charity, as we may endow a church without piety, if we consider the one as an expiation for sin, or the other as a substitution for holiness?

Some are ingenious in contriving, by a strange self-delusion, to swell the amount of their charity, by tacking to it extraneous items of a totally distinct character. The Author was formerly acquainted with a lady of rank, who though her benevolence was suspected to bear no proportion to the splendour of her establishment, was yet rather too apt to make her bounties a subject of conversation. After enumerating the various instances of her beneficence she often concluded by saying, 'notwithstanding my large family I give all this in charity *besides paying the poor rates*;' thus converting a compulsory act, to which all are equally subject, into a voluntary bounty.

Our corruptions are so liable to infect even our 'holy things,' that we should be vigilant in this best exercise of the best affections of the heart—affections which God, when he graciously converted a duty into a delight, gave us, in order, by a pleasurable feeling, to stir us up to compassion. We should be careful that the great enemy may not be plotting our injury, even when we are performing actions the most hostile to his interests.

As there is not a more lovely virtue in the whole Christian code, so there is not one which more imperatively demands our attention to the spirit with which we exercise it, and the temper with which we bear the disappointment sometimes attending our best designed bounties. Though charity is too frequently thrown away on those who receive it, it is never lost on the benefactor if 'he who gives, does it with simplicity.'—When the bountiful giver cannot find pleasure, he may always extract good. He may reap no small advantage himself from that liberality which has failed to confer any. He may gain benefit from the disappointment he experiences in the unworthiness of the object. When the project he had anxiously formed for doing good to another is defeated by perverseness, or requited by ingratitude, it not only does not check the spring of bounty in the real Christian, but it calls new virtues into action. The exercise of patience, an improvement in forbearance and forgiveness, a stronger conviction that we must not make the worthiness of the object the sole measure of our bounty, are well worth the money we have spent on the undeserving. Perhaps too the reiterated instances how little good the best man is able to do in this world, may serve to wean him from it, and be an additional inducement for looking forward to a better.

But it is much easier to relieve our neighbour's wants, than to bear with his errors; the one gratifies our natural feelings, while the other offends them; the most difficult as well as the most sublime branch of charity, therefore, is the forgiveness of injuries, is the love of our enemies. It is a love humbly aiming to resemble his, who sends his rain on the just and on the unjust; a love not inspired by partiality, nor extorted by merit. It is following the example, while we obey the precept of Christ, when we 'do good to them that hate us.' It is a charity which bursts with a generous disdain the narrow bounds of attachment and even of desert, levels every fence which selfish prudence would erect between itself and its enemies; it is a love with respect to the objects, though with a boundless disproportion as to the measure, resembling God's love to us; it aims to be universal in kind, though it is low in the degree.

A very able divine* has insisted that it is to this part of the character of the Almighty that our Saviour limits the injunction, 'Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' It is, indeed, one of the principal instances in which finite creatures can by imitation approximate to the character of God; most of his attributes rather requiring us to adore, than leaving it possible for us to imitate them. For though all the attributes of God afford the most exalted idea of complete perfection, yet the injunction to attain his image is strikingly applied in the New Testament to this particular part of the divine character. The Apostle applies our being 'followers of God, as dear children,' afterwards to this individual instance, 'forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you,' adding, 'and walk in love as

* See bishop Sherlock's sermon on the text, 'Be ye perfect,' &c. &c.

Christ also loved us.' 'So that,' says the bishop, 'his exhortation to follow God stands inclosed on both sides with the precepts of love and charity, as if he intended to secure it from being applied to any thing else.' St. Luke, who gives us an abridgement of the same sermon on the mount, from which the passage is taken, also suggests the practice of love and forgiveness from the example of the Almighty, 'who is kind to the unthankful and the evil. After having delivered the same beatitude, he corroborates the interpretation with an injunction, by saying, not be *perfect*, but 'be merciful as your Father also is merciful.'

Our Saviour impressed a solemn emphasis on the command to forgive the offences of others, when he implicated it with God's forgiveness of us. It is to be feared, that many who would think it an act of disobedience to omit the daily repetition of the divine prayer, of which this request forms so striking a clause, do not lay to heart the daily duty of supplicating for that frame of spirit which the petition involves. Can there be a more awful consideration, than that we put the grand request on which our eternal happiness depends, on this issue, when we inseparably associate our own hope of pardon, with the required and reasonable condition of pardoning others? Should we not be conscientiously cautious, how we put up this petition, when we reflect, that we offer it to the great Searcher of hearts, who, while he listens to the request, can exactly determine on the integrity which accompanies it? The divine Author of the prayer seems to hold out a sort of test of the spirit of our obedience, when he proposes this difficult duty, as a trial of our general conformity to his commands. It seems selected by infinite wisdom as a kind of pledge of our submission to his will in all other points: our interest is confederate with our duty in the practice of this high and peculiarly Christian grace. The requisition suggests at once the most absolute obligation, and the most powerful motive.

This forgiveness seems not only to be one of the grand distinctions between the religion of the heathen and the Christian world, but to form a considerable difference between the duties inculcated in the Old and the New Testament. In the former, indeed, there were not only indications and suggestions of this rule, but some exemplifications of its actual performance. It is remarkable, that when David, whose energy of character, or rather mysterious inspiration as a prophet, led him to be so vehement in his denunciations of vengeance on persons of professed enmity against God, and against himself as the anointed of God, yet exhibited eminent instances of placability in his conduct towards his own personal enemies, especially in the case of Saul. But, perhaps, the duty, after all, was not so fully made out, so clearly defined, so positively enjoined, nor was the frame of mind so evidently seen in 'them of old time.' We have many instances under that dispensation, of saints and prophets laying down their lives for their religion, but it was reserved for the first New Testament martyr, when expiring under a shower of stones from his enemies, to say, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. The reason is obvious. It being expected, that our notions and practices should be adapted to the revelation under which we live, this sublime species of charity should necessarily rise in proportion to the clearness and dignity of that dispensation. It is congruous, therefore, that our forgiveness of injuries should be exercised in far higher perfection under the Gospel, the professed object of which was to make a full and perfect revelation of the pardon of sin by the blood of a Redeemer. And we can only be said to have a conformity to his image, in proportion as we practice this grace. Let us, however, remember, to borrow the thought of an eminent divine, 'that our forgiving others will not alone procure forgiveness for ourselves, while our not forgiving others is a plain proof, that we ourselves are not forgiven.'

CHAP. X.

On Prejudice.

THERE is not a more curious subject of speculation, than to observe the vanity of colours with which opinion tinges truth: the bias which prejudice lends to facts, when it cannot deny them; the perversion it gives to the motive, when it cannot invalidate the circumstance; the warp and twist it gives to actions, which it dares not openly condemn; the disingenuousness into which it slides, even though it does not intend to maintain a falsehood; the bright rays with which it gilds, perhaps unconsciously, its own side of a question; the dark cloud by which it casts that of an adversary into the shade.

Prejudice, if not altogether invincible, is perhaps the most difficult of all errors to be eradicated from the human mind. By disguising itself under the respectable name of firmness, it is of infinitely slower extirpation than actual vice. For vice, though persisted in through the perverseness of the will, never sets itself up for virtue; a vicious man knows what is right, though his appetites deter him from following it; but a prejudice, being perhaps more frequently a fault of the judgment than of the heart, is sometimes persisted in upon principle. No man will defend a sin as such, but even good men defend a prejudice, though every one else sees that it is producing all the effects of a sin, promoting hatred, souring the temper, and exciting evils passions.

Yet, though it may incidentally be attached to a good man, there are few errors more calculated to estrange the heart from vital religion, because there are none under which men rest so satisfied. Under the practice of any immorality they are uneasy, and that uneasiness may lead to a cure; for the light of natural conscience is sufficiently strong to show, that sin and peace cannot dwell together. But prejudice effectually keeps a man from inquiring after truth, because he conceives that he is in full possession of it, and that he is following it up in the very error which keeps him so wide of it. Or if, with the Roman governor, he ask, 'what is truth?' like

him, he turns away for fear of an answer. The strongest light cannot penetrate eyes that are closed against it; while to the humble, who desire illumination, God gives not only the object, but the faculty of discerning it.

As it is mental, rather than moral prejudice, which is the present subject of consideration, we shall say little of those prejudices of which the passions and appetites are the cause. Interest and sensuality see the objects which absorb them through their own dense medium, while the vision of either is probably clear enough in judging of the objects of the other's passion; the blindness being partial, and confined, like the lunacy of some disordered patients, to the single object to which the disease has a reference. Even probity itself is not of sufficient force to guide our conduct; we see men of sound integrity and of good judgment on subjects where prejudice does not intervene, acting, where it does below the standard of ordinary men, governed by a name, carried away by a sound. It makes lovers of truth unjust, and converts wisdom into fatuity. It must, therefore, be an enlightened probity, or we may be injuring our fellow creatures, when we persuade ourselves we are doing God service. Paul does not appear to have been a profligate, but to have been correct, zealous, and moral, and to have earned a high reputation among his own narrow and prejudiced sect. His error was in his judgment. The error of Peter was in his affections. A sudden touch of self-love in this vacillating but warm hearted disciple, made him dread to share in his master's disgrace. But in this case, a single penetrating glance melted his very soul, brought him back to contrition, repentance, and love. To cure the prejudices of Paul a miracle was necessary.

While the powerful arguments of our Lord put even the Sadducees, the infidels of the day, 'to silence,' they produce no such effect on the professing Pharisees; instead of rejoicing to hear their great doctrine of the resurrection so fully vindicated, they redoubled their prejudices against him, at the very moment in which he had obtained such a triumph in their cause. The first thing they endeavoured, was to seek to entangle, by their casuistry, him who had just defeated the common enemy.

But, let us judge even the prejudiced without prejudice. Prejudice, to a certain degree, is not so much the fault of the individual, as of our common nature. And that sober tincture of it, which is inseparable from habits and attachments, is a fair and honest prepossession:—for instance, who ever reprobated, as a censurable prejudice, that generous feeling,

> For which our country is a name so dear?

But, after all, prejudice of some kind or other, is a natural inborn error, attached to that blindness, which is an incurable part of our constitution.

Disagreement of opinion, therefore, if it be an evil inseparable from our present state of being ought not to excite antipathy; complete unanimity of heart and sentiment being reserved as a part of the happiness of that more perfect state, where the effulgence of truth will dissipate all the error and misapprehension which cloud our judgment here.

People commonly intend to judge fairly: and, when they fail, it is as often an error of the understanding as of the heart. They form their opinion of some particular subject from what they see of it. But though they see only a part, they frequently form their opinion of that which remains unseen, more peremptorily than those who see the whole; for a large and clear view by affording a justness of conception, commonly induces humility. Perhaps, on their ignorance of those very parts of a question which they do not see, they form their decision on the whole; while the unseen points are precisely those which only could enable them to determine fairly on the general proposition.

We should not, however, very severely censure any for the mere opinion they form, this being a matter of the judgment rather than of the will; the true object of censure is their conduct under this false impression; in acting as hostilely as if their opinion was founded on the best ascertained facts. If we are all more or less prejudiced, it does not follow, that the conscientious act upon the feelings which the prejudice has excited. The harsh and the intolerant, indeed, let loose upon their adversaries all the bad passions which this disposition to prejudge opinions has stirred up; while the mild spirit in which Christianity governs, will conduct itself with the same general kindness as if no diversity of opinion subsisted. Though all prepossession arises from some cloudiness in the mind, it is a fair trial of the Christian temper, when the man who suffers by it, continues to exercise the same tolerant and indulgent spirit towards the prejudiced party, as if there were a mutual concurrence of sentiment. If he have no other ground of objection to the person from whom he differs, there is something of a large and liberal spirit in acting with him, and speaking of him, on other occasions, as if the matter in debate did not exist.

How endless and intricate are the misleadings of political prejudice! It is as detailed and minute in its operations, as it is broad and extensive in its compass. Will not the circumstance of voting on the same side often stand instead of the best qualities, in recommending one man to the good opinion of another? With this unfounded partiality is naturally connected a dislike to better men, on the mere ground of their taking the opposite side; for party, which takes such a large permission to think and act for itself, takes care never to allow to others the liberty which it so broadly and uniformly assumes.

He who drinks deep into the spirit of party, minutely pencils all the shades of misrepresentation; his prejudice blackening, his partiality whitening; the one deforming what is fair, the other beautifying what is foul; the one defacing temples, the other garnishing sepulchres. Providence, in the mean time, working its own way by these perverse instruments; the worst designers being sometimes surprised into doing more good than they intended, by a wish to anticipate the good projected by the opposite party, and so to throw an odium upon them, for not

having been able to effect the same, though they had perhaps planned it, and though adverse circumstances alone had interrupted the scheme, or the want of a suitable occasion had delayed its accomplishment. Thus good is effected, the public is benefited, all are pleased. The conscientious rejoice that it is done at any rate; the prejudiced, that their party have the credit of doing it.

There are among the exhaustless manœuvres of a party-champion, if I may so speak, gestures and signs of disapprobation, which are of equal efficacy with language itself. There are also artifices in writing, that resemble intonation and accent, in a skilful speaker, which, by a turn of the voice, or a clause in a parenthesis, throw in a shade of distinction, lend an emphasis which makes mystery intelligible, and helps out the apprehension of the reader. There is such a thing as an intellectual shrug of the shoulders, a mental shake of the head, an implication that has more meaning than an assertion, a hint which can effectually detract from the commendation which prudence has extorted, and which serves to awaken suspicion more than a direct charge. Whatever is omitted, is sure to be more than supplied; whatever is dexterously left open by the writer, never fails to be over-charged by the reader, who always values himself on his ingenuity in filling up an hiatus. There is a way of setting out with general praise, in order to make the meditated charge more effectual. A practised reader will see through the artful circumlocutory preface, which is gradually preparing to introduce the little, though effectually disparaging particle *but*. These artifices raise up the ghost of some unknown evil in the character to be injured, and excite, at the same time, the idea of prudence and moderation in the censure. It is a mysterious giving out, and assumed regret at being compelled to speak, a hypocritical conscientiousness, a reluctance of communication which, after it has told much more than all it knows, tenderly affects to have kept back the worst.

One evil which commonly arises from the perusal of a work of a systematic opposition, whether the object be public or private, is, that it has a tendency to bias the more liberal reader, who took it up in the most impartial state of mind, with as undue a prejudice in favor of the party attacked, as the assailant laboured to establish in favour of his own; so that, if any injustice be excited, it is on the contrary side to that which the author intended. Generally speaking, however, people do not sit down with a pure design to read impartially any thing, which, from the title of the work, or the name of the author, they foresee or suspect is likely to contradict their creed, whether previously adopted from conviction or prepossession.

But, to confine our observations to the prejudices which embitter common life:—when we fancy we have been injured by some unfounded evil report, let us avoid considering the character of the reporter, or our own supposed injury, under the immediate impression of the intelligence, but try to divert our thoughts to some other subject, till our heated spirits have time to cool. We shall otherwise, too probably, feel and utter many things which exceed the bounds of strict justice. When the resentment has, in some measure subsided, let us endeavour to collect and to retain only the simple and exact truth; what the enemy really said, and not what he suspected he might say. Let us retrench all that is imaginary, all that is merely suspicion; let us cut off all the aggravations of conjecture, all the inventions of passion, all the additions of revenge, all that belongs to unsubstantiated report;—when these due retrenchments are made, we shall often see that the injury is not so great. It is no wonder if the object we saw through a mist was enlarged; a clear medium reduces it to its natural size.

But supposing the worst to be true; religion, operating on observation, will at length teach us to set these metaphysical evils, these afflictions of the imagination, this anguish of wounded pride or irritated self-love, over against the real, deep, substantial miseries of body and mind, under which thousands of our fellow-creatures, nay many of our friends, are at the moment sinking; and we shall blush at our own irritability; we shall bless God for the lightness of our own lot; we shall even be thankful for that evil which exists only in the opinion, or the report of a fallible creature, and which makes no part of our real self.

But, above all, let us never revenge the injury by opposing *our* injustice to that by which we suffer, by acting against our opponents with the same spirit with which we accuse them of acting against us. Retaliation, which is the justice of a vulgar mind, is of the very essence of an unchristian spirit. Where this is indulged, all the virtues of the adversary are rooted out by our resentment, and it is well, if we do not plant vices in their room. Or if we do not invent faults for them, are we not too much disposed to take comfort in those they have: to cherish unkind reports of them, to give them a welcome hearing and a wide circulation? Nay, self-estimation and rooted prejudice may lead us entirely to mistake the character of him we call our enemy. A man is not necessarily wicked because he does not admire us. He may dislike some of our notions without hating our persons; or, after all, his prejudices may not be entirely ill-founded: and if we will examine ourselves on the ground of his charge in some particular instance, we may find, that we have been wrong in a way which we might not have discovered without him. If his detection of our error lead us to correct it, we should not reckon that man among our worst enemies: or, if we should happen to be right, there is a great advantage in being assisted by the mode of attack, to know how to collect materials for our defence.

We must also learn sometimes to endure censure for things right in themselves, and, under existing circumstances, necessary, which yet may not appear right to others, because it may not be prudent to disclose those secret springs of action, which, if revealed, would convince others that we have not acted wrong. Instead of spending our spirits in invective, or spoiling our temper by hatred; instead of liking our faults the better, or adhering to them the more, because pointed out by those we dislike; would

it not be wiser to inquire, if our opinions may not be prejudices, as well as theirs? For it does not inevitably follow, that even the dislike of bad men is any certain proof of our goodness; though our natural propensity to think our own conduct and opinions right, disposes us to think them more right in proportion to the opposition which is made to either. We are blind to our own singularities, even though those singularities may be errors; and a spirit of resentment or resistance makes that blindness often more obstinate. On the other hand; may we not be too much disposed to think our censurers, whom we call wicked, more wicked than they are; or, though there may be errors in their conduct, this does not take from them the capacity of judging ours. Even though their hearts are wrong, their judgment, as far as relates to others, may not be totally perverted. It is no infallible proof of their bad judgment, that they think meanly of ours.

But allowing that their judgment is as incorrect as their practice, and that their dislike proceeds from the 'strong antipathy of bad to good, yet we may turn this dislike to profit. That hostility to religion, of which the Scripture so frequently speaks, is not intended to give the Christian a high notion of his own piety, but to encourage him against the fear and dejection which that hostility might create. If he meet with opposition, he must not fly for refuge to his own goodness, as contrasted with the faults of his opponent; nor must he be depressed, 'as if some strange thing had happened to him;' much less must he convert the opposition he meets with, into an evidence, that he is in all instances right. In the consolations which the Gospel holds out to the sufferer for righteousness' sake, it was intended to inspire him with courage, not vanity; with confidence in God, not in himself. He must not, therefore, so much value himself because he has enemies, as suspect that he may have enemies, because he has deserved them. Or perhaps, their is something wrong in us which we have not yet discovered, for which God permits us to have enemies. This suspicion may serve to render us circumspect, and quicken our endeavours to remove the ground of their censure. This, even if it do not reconcile them to us, will still make us gainers by their enmity; so that, in any case, the Apostle's interrogation, 'And who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?' loses nothing of its force.

Who can forbear to lament, when he sees such a litigious spirit pervades superior minds, such airy nothings conjured into difficulties, sufficient to clog the wheels of the noblest undertakings; an effect resulting merely from the partiality with which even wise men sometimes cleave to their own prepossessions, added to a reluctance to examine what may possibly be wrong on their own side, or right on the other?

It would be comparatively a small evil, if prejudices were only fostered on occasions in which religion has no concern. If we could hope to see such a general proficiency in true piety, that, where the sentiments of men concurred on all essential points, each side would sacrifice something on points that were indifferent, it would be a sort of realization of the communion of saints. But if it be called an act of Omnipotence to 'make men of one mind in a *house*,' what would it be to make them of one mind in a town or a kingdom? If we could witness a cordial agreement between those who profess to have the interests of the same religion at heart, such a concurrence in the wish to promote its great practical objects, as would render them willing to concede their own theories, or their own judgment, in things that do not affect any of the vitals of religion, with such noble materials worked up into action, what a glorious world might this become! This combination of Christian feeling would extinguish all unkind debate, 'all malice, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking. This peace-offering would oblige no one to renounce his principles; yet, by the extinction of petty differences, by such a confederacy of honest hearts and candid spirits uniting for some great public object, this wilderness would almost be converted into the garden of God. Nor would an inferior portion of the benefit be derived to the minds of those by whom, for a cause of general importance, the inconsiderable sacrifice was made; so far from it, it would be hard to say which made up the largest aggregate of good, the private exercise of individual virtue, or the promotion of the general end. But, alas! do we not sometimes see Christians more forward in attacking and exposing each other, than in buckling on their arms to make war on the common enemy? Are they not more ready to wage that war against a pious brother, who does not view some one opinion exactly in the same light with themselves, though equally zealous in the promotion of general truth, than against those who have no religion at all? What a church triumphant would our's be in one sense, though still militant in another, if there was a union of real Christians joining in one firm band to assail the strong holds of vice and immorality, instead of laying open each other's errors and mistakes, and thus exposing the great cause itself to the derison of the unbeliever.

We cannot dispute ourselves into heaven, but we may lose our way thither, while we are litigating unimportant topics—things which a man may not be much the better if he hold, and which if he hold them unrighteously, he might be better if he held them not. The enemies of religion cannot injure it so much as its own divisions about itself.

He who is zealously running after a favourite opinion, is in danger, in order to establish his point, of losing his moderation by the way, and over-stepping truth at the end: and, what is worse, of converting the sober defence of his own system into a hostile attack of that of another; for a hot disputant seldom wages defensive war. The point under discussion so heats his temper, as to make him lose sight of its real importance. Every consideration gives way in support of that opinion which has now the predominance in his mind. And this opinion is not seldom contended for with an eagerness proportioned to its real want of solidity; since great and important objects are seen by their

own light, and require not the false fire of pride or passion to blazon their worth. Often does the hot controvertist assert that to be of the very essence of religion, which is but a mere adjunct; and often he seems to wonder how men can bestow so much time and thought on any other topic, while his grand concern is under consideration.

It is because these rooted and unexamined prejudices involve human affairs in so much perplexity, that the rectification of our judgment is one of the most important objects of our concern. The opinion which others entertain of us, though it may hurt our fortune or our fame, yet it cannot injure our more essential interests. Their judgment of us can neither wound our conscience nor shake our integrity. The false judgment we form of *them* may do both, especially if we act upon the opinion we have formed, if we speak injuriously of those of whom we think unkindly; if, by following a blind prejudice or precipitate judgment, we decide upon their characters, without possessing those grounds for determining which we insist are indispensable in the opinion they form of us. Jealousy, resentment, envy, often darken our perception, and are secretly operating on our minds, while we persuade others, and too probably ourselves, that we are promoting the interests of truth and justice, in exposing the faults, or counteracting the schemes of another.

Controversies will be for ever carried on, though converts are not made: for I do not remember, that of any of the ancient sects of philosophers, any went over to their opponents. Among the professors of the old school divinity, it does not appear that the disciples ever changed their master, that the advocates of the *angelical* Doctor ever adopted the cause of the *irrefragable*;* and it is evident that the followers of Jansenius and Loyola died with the same mutual hostility in which they had lived.

As truth, however, will be assaulted, it must be defended. Controversial discussions, therefore, are not only harmless, but useful, provided truth be the inspiring motive, and charity the medium of conducting them. Truth is frequently beaten out by conflicting blows, when it might have contracted rust and impurity by lying quiet uninquired into and unassailed. We are in danger of growing negligent about a truth which is never attacked, or of surrounding it with our own fancies, and appending to it our own excrescences; while the assailant teaches even the friendly examiner to clear the principal of all foreign mixtures, and, by giving it more purity, to give it wider circulation.

But, as we before observed, a thorough partisan in religion, as well as in politics, seldom takes up a book of controversy with an unbiassed mind. He has a pre-determination which seldom gives way to argument. He does not see, that the supporter of his own cause may be maintaining it in a wrong temper; that, while he is fighting for orthodoxy, he may be aiming his side blows at a personal antagonist, or giving the death's wound to charity. He does not perceive, that he may be injuring the interests of practical religion, while he is labouring to promote such as are doctrinal, that he may be inflaming the temper, while he is informing the understanding. Yet a controversy is sometimes so managed, that, though truth may be vindicated, the minds of plain Christians may be little informed. Such readers do not understand the logician's terms, which, though they may have the effect of silencing the opponent, do but little towards enlightening the mind or strengthening the faith. Controversies, therefore, in religion or politics often do little good, in comparison of the labour they cost, and the evil tempers they excite. They are seldom read by those to whom, if temperately conducted, they might be of the most service—the unprejudiced. The perusal is commonly confined to two classes, friends and enemies. Now the friends and enemies of a writer form but a small proportion of the world of readers. Of these, the one flies to his book to get his prepossessions strengthened, the other to get his antipathies confirmed. The partisan was pre-determined that no argument should shake him, the adversary sat down with the same liberal resolution. Nay, the probability is, that he will declare his former opinion is more immoveably settled by the very reasons the opposer has suggested, so that he feels he is furnished with fresh arms by the antagonist himself.

But though neutrality is not a state of mind to be desired, moderation is. Even these polemical Christians, if each would look calmly and kindly on the other, might discover in his opponent a striking likeness of his own features, if not an entire similarity of complexion: a likeness sufficient to prove that they are both of the same family, all children of one common Father, though they do not carry the exact resemblance in some minutenesses in which parity is not necessary to prove affinity. The general family-likeness should, however, operate as an inducement to treat each other with brotherly kindness, even if they were not assured, which they all profess to be, that the common Father will be the common Judge.

* Scotus, Aquinas, and the other school divines, were distinguished by these and similar epithets.

CHAP. XI.

Particular Prejudices.

It is no inconsiderable part of our duty in our necessary connexions with that motely mass of characters of which mankind is composed, to conquer certain prejudices which are too apt to arise, especially in persons of fastidious temper and delicate taste, against those, who, though essentially valuable in their general character, have something about them which is positively disagreeable; or who do not fall in with some of our ideas, or whose manners are not congenial to our feeling. To wait before we love our fellow creatures, till their character be perfect, is to wait till we meet in heaven; and not to serve them till the feeling be reciprocal, is to act on the religion of the publican, and not of the Christian. We should love people for what we see in them of the image of their Maker

though it be marred and disfigured. That piety which makes them amiable in His sight, should prevent their being disgusting in ours. If we consulted our principles more, and our taste less, it would cure us of this sharp inquest into their infirmities.

Yet on the other hand, if religious but coarsely-mannered persons, however safe they may be as to their own state, could be aware how much injury their want of delicacy and prudence is doing to the minds of the polished and discriminating—who, though they may admire Christianity in the abstract, do not love it so cordially as to bear with the grossness of some of its professors; nor understand it so intimately, as to distinguish what is genuine from what is extrinsic—If they could conceive what mischief they do to religion, by the associations which they teach the refined to combine with it, so as to lead them inseparably to connect piety with vulgarity, they would endeavour to correct their own taste, from the virtuous fear of shocking that of others. They should remember, that many a thing is the cause of evil which yet is no excuse for it; that many a truth is brought into discredit by the disagreeableness which may be appended to it, and which, though utterly foreign, is made to belong to it.

In addition to the infirmities which, from the fault of nature, or the errors of education, are not perhaps so easily avoided, there are others which are purely voluntary.—Certain religionists there are who torment themselves with a chimera till they become the victims of the prejudice of their own creation. There is a querulous strain of pious vanity, in which, with a most unamiable egotism, they delight to indulge. It is a sort of traditionary lamentation of evils, which, having once been the lot of Christianity in the most awful extreme, are assumed to be still, in no inconsiderable degree attached to its followers. Surrounded with all the conveniences of life, and faring comfortably, if not sumptuously, every day, they yet complain of persecution, as if Christianity still subjected its followers to the sufferings of those primitive disciples, 'of whom the world was not worthy.' But let them compare the dreadful catalogue of torments enumerated by the Apostle to the Hebrews—enumerated the more feelingly, as he had experienced in all their extremity the sufferings he describes;—let them compare ?' ve with their own petty trials, of which, the worst they have ever felt or feared, is that 'of mockings:' '*cruel*, mockings,' perhaps, as to the temper of the reviler, but innoxious to the imaginary sufferer. The glorious profession of the saints of old brought on them bonds and imprisonments by order of the government. Ours is sanctioned by the ruling powers. '*They* were destitute, afflicted, tormented;' our distresses are seldom caused by our piety, but frequently by our want of it. *They* were denied the exercise of their religion, we are protected in ours. *They* were obliged to meet clandestinely at undue hours in incommodious places. With us, provision is made for public worship, and attendance on it encouraged and commanded.

Let none of us, then, proudly or peevishly complain, as if our abundant piety was either forbidden, discouraged, or under-rated. Private prejudice, and individual hatred, are indeed sufficiently alive, but the blows they aim fall hurtless as the feebly-lifted lance of Priam. If, then, we allow ourselves to murmur at our own disadvantages, will it not look as if we inwardly lamented that we are so very good to so little purpose; as if we repined at not being rewarded by universal applause for the superabundance of our piety? May we not, by our complaints, lead the world to suspect that our goodness was practised as a bait for that applause, and that, having missed it, we feel as if we had laboured in vain?

But, from the prejudices which one class of Christians are too ready to indulge against another, we turn to those of a different character; to the philosophical man of the world, who is prepossessed not so much against any particular class of Christians, as against Christianity itself. These unhappy prejudices are often laid in by an education in which no one thing has been neglected except religion. The intellect has been enlarged by the grandeur, and polished by the splendour, of pagan literature, which took early possession of the yet vacant mind, and still maintains its ascendancy with that power and energy which naturally belong to first and therefore, deep impressions. The subsequent character continues to feel the effect of the excessive admiration early excited by some favourite authors, by whom the more impetuous passions and generous vices are exalted into virtues, while the spurious virtues are elevated into perfections little short of divine, and the whole adorned with whatever can captivate the fancy and enchant the taste; with beautiful imagery, ingenious fiction, and noble poetry. Who, indeed, does not feel divided between admiration at their writings, and regret, that the writers were not providentially favoured with divine illumination? Their brightness, like that of ebony, is a fine polish on a dark substance.

Here the indignant man of letters, if any such should condescend to cast an eye on these pages, will exclaim, Are scholars, then, necessarily irreligious? God forbid! far from me be such a vulgar insinuation—far from me such a preposterous charge; not only against a multitude of eminent lay-christians, but against the whole of that large and venerable body, whose life and labours are dedicated to religion, all of whom are, or ought to be, learned.

But it is nevertheless true, reason on it as we may, that, in the state of excitement above described, every youth of taste and spirit, who has not been early grounded in Christian principles, must necessarily afterwards first open the volume of Inspiration, and find it destitute of all that false but dazzling lustre with which the page of ancient learning is decorated.

And what must considerably add to the prejudice which may reasonably be expected to be thus excited, is, that they find the great object of one religion has been to pull down all the trophies of false glory which the other had so successfully reared. The dignity of human nature, of which they have read and felt so much, is laid prostrate in the dust. Man is stripped

of his usurped attributes, robbed of his independent grandeur. A new system, of what appear to him mean-spirited and sneaking virtues—charity, simplicity, devotion, forbearance, humility, self-denial, forgiveness of injuries—is set up in direct opposition to those more ostensible qualities which are so much more flattering to the natural human heart.

Those obstacles to religious progress are removed, when, in early institution, the defective principles of the one school are not only pointed out and guarded against, but are even, as is frequently the case, converted into salutary lessons, by being placed in just contrast with the other, and are made at once to vindicate the scheme, and to exalt the principles of Christianity.

But he into whose character these principles have not been infused, is too likely to set up on the stock of his own underived powers. The cardinal vice of an irreligious reasoner will naturally be that pride which sets him on considering the Gospel as a narrower of human understanding, a debaser of the soaring spirit of intellectual man, a fetter on the expatiating fancy, a clog on the aspiring mind. This opinion, which he rather adopts by hearsay or tradition than by studying the sacred volume, continues to keep him ignorant of its contents. He is satisfied with knowing Christianity, only in the state in which it is presented to him in certain passages, torn from their proper position, disjoined with malignant ingenuity, and distorted by perverted comment, from that connexion which would have solved every difficulty and annihilated the triumphant cavil. Or if, under this influence, he takes a superficial glance at Christianity, he sees a religion, which though it prohibits no legitimate greatness, yet a religion whose object is not to make man, according to the estimation of this world, great. His secret prejudices, too, may be augmented by the revolting doctrine, that he is not able to do any thing right of himself. He is to do the work, and to give the glory to another. After having followed with rapture the conqueror of Carthage hanging up his victorious laurels in the capitol, he will feel indignant to be taught, that the Christian conqueror, instead of glorying in his triumphant crown, 'casts it before the throne.'

He had observed in pagan lore, abstract truth prepared for the philosophers, pageants, feasts, and ceremonies for the people. This distinction of rank and intellect flattered human pride. In Christianity he finds one rule, and that a plain rule: one faith, and that an humbling faith; one scheme of duties, irrespective of station or talents: while, in the other, the systems of the learned, and the superstitions of the vulgar, were as distinct as any two religions, and as inefficacious as none.

But, after all, it is not the idolatry exhibited in the Greek and Roman writers that perhaps can overthrow his faith, though their licentiousness may affect his morals. The hardest blow to his principles will be given by the modern champions of unbelief; by writers against whom the young are not on their guard, because, without Christianity, they slide in under the general title of Christians, disseminating contraband wares under false colours. The wound inflicted by the baptized infidel is more profound than that of the polytheist, whose absurdities render his aim comparatively innoxious. The preposterous systems of a false religion are harmless, compared with objections raised, misrepresentations sent forth, and sarcasms insinuated against the true one.

But if the enthusiastic votary of those systems go no farther than to establish philosophy as his standard, and taste as his guide, when he is brought to think—not that philosophy and taste are to be abandoned, for Christianity requires no such sacrifice—but that they are to be admired subordinately, the misfortune is, that the second half of life is sometimes spent in imperfectly counteracting the principles imbibed in the first half. It is not easy to get rid of the prepossession in favour of a morality untinctured with religion; of 'that love of fame which the pure spirit doth raise,' but which it is the office of the renewed spirit to lower—of the admiration exhausted on splendid, but vicious characters—of the idolatry cherished for unprincipled heroes—of the partiality felt for all the powerful rivals which genius has raised up to religion—of all the sins that poetry has canonized—all the sophistry that praise has sanctified—all the pernicious elegancies of the gay—all the hollow reasonings of the grave.

In this state of neutrality between religion and unbelief, happy is it for the faltering novice if he be not fatally offended, that Christianity admits people who are not elegant-minded, who are not intellectual, to the same present advantages, to the same future hope, with the profound thinker, and logical reasoner. And, even after the most successful struggles in this new science, it will still be found, and the discovery is humiliating, that the religious attainments of the unlearned are often more rapid, because less obstructed, than those of 'the wise and the disputer of this world.' It requires at least a smattering of wit and knowledge to be sceptical, while the plain Christian, who brings no ingenuity into his religion, is little liable to the doubts of the superficial caviller, who seeks to be 'wise above what is written.' For if the endowments of the unlearned are smaller, they are all carried to one point. They have no other pursuit to divide or divert their attention; they have fewer illusions of the imagination to repel; they bring no opposing system to the Christian scheme; they bring no prejudices against revelation, which holds out a promise of reversionary happiness to those who are destitute of present enjoyments; and Christianity will generally be more easily believed by those whose more immediate interest it is to think it true. They have no interfering projects to perplex them; no contradictory knowledge to unlearn, their uninfluenced minds are open to impressions, and good impressions are presented to them. They have less pride to subdue, and no prepossessions to extinguish. They have no compromise to make with Christianity, no images of deities, which the philosopher like the emperor Tiberius, wishes to set up in the same temple with Christ; no adverse tenets which they wish to incorporate with his religion, no ambition to convert it into a better thing than he made it. We

have seen how much philosophy early impeded the reception of pure Christianity in some of the wisest and most virtuous pagan converts. Origen and Tertullian did not receive the truth from heaven with the same simplicity as the fishermen of Galilee.

To prove that this is no flight of enthusiastic fancy, let us recollect with what an extraordinary elevation and expansion of soul the Author of our religion bore his divine testimony to this truth: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' He then, instead of accounting for it by natural means, resolves the mystery into the good pleasure of God—'*Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*'

Even the vulgarity which, as we have already observed, mixes with, and debases the religion of the man of inferior attainments; the incorrect idiom in which he expresses his feelings and sentiments; the coarse images and mean associations which eclipse the divine light, do not extinguish it: they rather, in some measure, prove its intrinsic brightness by its shining through so dense a medium. When the man of refinement sees, as he cannot but see, what amelioration Christianity confers on the character of the uneducated; how it improves his habits; raises his language; what a change it effects in his practice; what a degree of illumination it gives to his dark understanding; what consolation it conveys to his heart; how it lightens the burdens of his condition, and cheers the sorrows of his life—he will, if he be candid, acknowledge, that there must needs be a powerful efficacy in that religion which can do more for the ignorant and illiterate, than philosophy has ever done for the great and the learned. And is it not an unanswerable evidence of the truth of Christianity and the power of grace, when we see men far surpassing all others in every kind of knowledge, themselves so far surpassed in religious knowledge by persons absolutely destitute of all other.

But if these weak and humble disciples afford a convincing evidence of the truth of Christianity; if even these low recipients exhibit a striking exemplification of its excellence, yet we must confess they cannot exhibit an equally sublime idea of christian perfection, they cannot adduce the same striking evidences in its vindication, they cannot adorn its doctrines with the same powerful arguments as highly educated Christians. Habituated to inquiry and reflection, these are capable of forming more just views of the character and attributes of God, more enlarged conceptions of his moral government. They have also the advantage of drawing on their secular funds to augment their spiritual riches. They are conversant with authors contemporary with the inspired writers. Acquaintance with ancient manners and oriental usages also gives great advantage to the lettered readers of Scripture, and, by enabling them to throw new light on passages which time had rendered obscure, adds fresh strength and double confirmation, to a faith which was before 'barred up with ribs of iron.'*

Scripture also affords a larger range of contemplation to those enlightened minds who study human nature at the same time, or who have previously studied it; because it was upon his own knowledge of the human character that the Saviour of the world so strikingly accommodated his religion to the wants and the relief of that being for whose salvation it was intended.

The better educated, also, will better discern, because it demands a higher exercise of the rational powers, that passages of a similar sound have not seldom a dissimilar meaning; and that it is not the word, but the ideas, which constitute the resemblance. The want of this discernment has led many well disposed, but ill informed persons, into mistakes.

Again:—Many detached texts are meant as a brief statement of a general truth, and intended to lead the reader into such trains of reflection as shall 'exercise unto godliness,' instead of exhibiting a full delineation and giving the whole face and figure, every side and aspect of the subject. Scripture frequently proposes some important topic in a popular manner, without making out its full deductions, or its series of consequences. Now, for the fuller understanding these heads, and turning them to their due improvement, the advantage lies entirely on the side of the thinking and the reasoning reader. It must be confessed, however, that the humble, though illiterate Christian, is able to attain all the practical benefits of these suggestions. He compares Scripture with Scripture, he substitutes no opinions of his own for those he there meets with, he never attempts to improve upon Christianity, he never wishes to make the Bible a better thing than he finds it. By diligent application, and serious prayer, his understanding enlarges with his piety. Above all, he does the 'will of God;' and, therefore, 'knows of the doctrine that it is of God.'

It must be confessed also, on the other hand, that the professed scholar, by converting Scripture learning into theses of discussion, is in some danger of making his knowledge more critical than practical. The same reason which is meant to enlighten, may be employed to explain away his faith; and his learning which adorns is capable also of being turned to discredit it.

We must, however, admit, that when our supposed man of high education becomes essentially pious, his piety will be of a higher strain. It is more pure, more perfect, more exempt from erroneous mixtures, more clear of debasing association, more entirely free from disgusting cant and offensive phraseology; less likely to run into imprudence, error, and excess; less in

* The paltry cavil on the impossibility that the penitent woman could anoint the feet of Jesus as he sat at meat, could only mislead such readers as were unacquainted with the recumbent posture in which the ancients took their meals. The triumphant sneer at the paralytic, who was let down from the housetop, through the tiling with his couch, could only shake the faith of those who are ignorant of the manner in which the houses of eastern countries were roofed.—Whether infidel writers took advantage of the supposed ignorance of their readers, or whether their ridicule of these imputed absurdities of Scripture arose from their own ignorance, we will not determine. Instances might be multiplied without number of this ignorance, or of this disingenuousness.

danger of the gloominess of superstition on one hand, and the wildness of fanaticism on the other. Having the use of a better judgment in the choice, he is not in the same danger of being misled by ignorant instructors; he is not liable to be drawn away by a vanity so difficult to restrain in the uneducated religious man; a vanity so frequently excited when he sees his own superiority, in this great point, to his worse informed neighbours. From this vanity, and this want of the restraint of that modesty imposed by superior education, the man of low condition often appears more religious than he is, because, being disposed to be proud of his piety, he is forward to talk of it. While the higher bred frequently appear less pious than they really are, from the good taste and delicacy which commonly accompany a cultivated mind. There is also another reason why they exhibit it less, they are aware that, in their own society, the exhibition would bring them no great credit.

If unlettered Christians labour under some disadvantages, we repeat it, they yet afford an internal evidence of the truth of Christianity, and an evidence of no small value. They show that it is the same principle which, when rightly received, pervades alike all hearts; a principle which makes its direct way to understandings impervious to the shafts of wit, and insensible to the deductions of reasoning—to minds sunk in low pursuits, indurated by vulgar habits. It is a striking proof of its being the same principle, that such seemingly disqualified persons possess as clear views of its nature, at least of its broad and saving truths, as the man of genius and the scholar; destitute as they are of all his advantages, wanting perhaps his natural perspicacity, unused to his habits of inquiry, incapable of that spirit of disquisition which he brings from his other subjects to the investigation of this. No one, if he examine impartially, can fail to be struck with this grand characteristic of the truth of Christianity—not only, that in all degrees of capacity and education in the same country, but that in different countries, in those where taste and learning are carried to the highest perfection, and in dark and ignorant nations, where not only the sun of science has never dawned, but where literature has never softened, nor philosophy enlarged the mind, where no glimpse of religion can be caught by a reflex light, as is the case in polished and Christian countries—yet wherever Christianity has made its way, and pierced through the native obscurity, there the genuine spirit, and the great essential fruits of the gospel, will be found just the same; the same impression is made by the same principle; the same results spring from the same cause, and the disciples of Christ, whether it be the converted Greenlander or the Academical believer, are recognised in all their distinguishing features, are identified in all the leading points. Such a concurrence in sentiment, feeling, and practice, such a union in faith, hope, and charity, amongst persons dissimilar in all other respects, unlike in all other qualities, unequal in all other requisites; minds never made to be akin by nature thus allied by grace, bearing the same stamp of resemblance in spirit as their possessors bear in the common properties of body: all this is a convincing proof that there must be something divine in a principle which can assimilate such contrarieties—which can re-unite those in one common centre who differ in all other distinctions to produce identity in the leading point. Does not all this prove it indeed to be the work of God, a work which requires not previous accomplishments or preparatory research, but only a willing mind, an unprejudiced spirit, and an humble heart? Does it not prove, that where the essence, and the spirit of Christianity really reside, it will produce the one grand effect, *a new heart and a new life.*

CHAP. XII.

Further causes of Prejudice.

It is a singular fact that the infidel and the fanatic sometime meet at the same point of error—that reason has little to do with religion. The enthusiast we are hopeless of convincing by argument, because he is commonly ignorant; but the lettered sceptic may be better taught even by his pagan masters. Plutarch, after a large discussion whether brutes had any reason, determines in the negative from this consideration, *because they had no knowledge or feeling of a Deity.* The great Roman orator expresses the same idea when he asserts, *that a capacity for religion was the distinguishing mark of rationality, and that this capacity is the most unequivocal sign of reason.*

Yet sound reason and Christian piety are sometimes represented as if they were belligerent powers, as if *Orders in Council* had been issued to cut off all commerce between them; as if they were better calculated eternally to meet sword in hand, than in the conciliatory way of treaty and negociation; as if every victory of the one, must necessarily be obtained at the expense of the other's defeat. But is it not an affront to the Giver of every good gift to represent his highest natural and his supernatural endowments as infallibly hostile to each other? It is evident that when reason and religion act in concert, they strengthen each other's hands. But when they injudiciously act in opposition, perverted reason starves the ardour of piety, or ill-judging piety hands over reason to obloquy and scorn. In every case, the ill-understood jealousy of each injures the interests of both.

The truth is, sound and sober Christianity is so far from discountenancing the use of reason, that she invites its co-operation, knowing that it possesses powerful arms to defend her cause; to defend her against the encroachments of error, the absurdities of fanaticism, the inroads of superstition, the assaults of infidelity. But while she treats it not as a rival but an ally, Christianity, strong in Almighty strength, maintains her own imperial power unfringed. While she courts the friendship of her confederate, she allows not her own uncontrolled superiority to be usurped. She assigns to reason its specific office, and makes it know and keep its proper limits. The old law, indeed, being a

formula of ceremonies, and a digest of ordinances for one particular people, left not so full an exercise for the use of reason. Descending to the most minute particulars, and being expanded into the most detailed directions, it left little for the disciple but to read the rule and follow it. But the New Testament being, as we have elsewhere observed, rather a system of principles, than a mere didactic table of small as well as great duties, leaves much more to the exercise of reason, and furnishes a much larger field for the understanding to develop, to compare, to separate, to combine. The whole plan of duty is, indeed, most clearly and distinctly laid open; but every uniting particle, every intermediate step, every concatenating link, is not traced out with amplitude and fulness.

The more instructed Christian will perceive that some expressions are merely figurative; some are directions for persons under one circumstance, and some for those under another. The Gospel requires, indeed, as implicit submission from the Christian, as the law required from the Jew; but while it proposes truths, all of which equally demand his obedience, some of them require more especially the use of his reflection, and the exercise of his sagacity. We allude not to the great 'mysteries of godliness,' but to duties which are of individual application.

If we were to pursue prejudice through all its infinite variety, we should never have done with the inexhaustible subject. Observation presents to us followers of truth of a very different cast, though their uniform object be the same. These persons, while they sometimes seek her temple by different paths, are yet oftener kept wide of each other by words than by things. Whatever, indeed, be the separating principle, prejudice is always carried to its greatest height by the impatience of the too fiery on the one hand, and the contempt of the too frigid on the other. But both, as we observed, maintain their distance more by certain leading terms by which each is found to be discriminated, and by an intolerance in each, to the terms adopted by the other, than by any radical distinction which might fairly keep them asunder. Now we do not wish them to relinquish the use of their peculiar terms, because these terms either do, or should designate to their minds the most important characters of religion. The Christian should neither shrink from his own strong hold, nor treat with repulsive disdain, him who appears earnest in his approaches towards it, though he has not as yet, through some prejudice of education, sought it in a direct way. There are many terms, such as *faith* and *grace*, and others which might be mentioned, which subject the more advanced Christian to the imputation of enthusiasm and the charge of cant. These, however, are words which are the signs of things on which his eternal hopes depend, and he uses them, even though he may sometimes do it unseasonably, yet not as the Shibboleth of a profession, but because there are no others exactly equivalent to their respective meanings. In fact, if he did not use them when occasion calls, he would be deserting his colours, and be making a compromise, to the ruin of his conscience.

But let him not in return fall too heavily on what are, to his ear, the obnoxious terms of his adversary. Let him not be so forward to consider the terms *virtue* and *rectitude* as implying heresies that must be hewed down without mercy; as substantives which must never find a place in the Christian vocabulary. They are not only very innocent but very excellent words, if he who utters them only means to express by virtue those good works which are the fruits of a right faith, and by rectitude that unbending principle of equity and justice which designates the confirmed Christian. The abuse of these terms may, indeed, make the more pious adversary a little afraid of using them, as the unnecessary multiplication of ordinary cases in which the more scriptural terms are pressed into the service, may make the less advanced Christian unreasonably shy of obtruding them.

But why must we villify in others what we are cautious of using ourselves, in order to magnify what we chuse to adopt? We should rather be glad that those who somewhat differ from us, come so near as they do; that they are more religious than we expected; that if they are in error, they are not in hostility; or if seemingly averse, it is more to the too indiscriminate and light use of the opponent's terms, than to the sober reception of the truths they convey. Let us be glad even at the worst, to see opposition mitigated, differences brought into a narrower compass. Let us not encounter as leaders of hostile armies, but try what can be done by negotiation, though never of course by concession in essentials. If the terms virtue and rectitude are used to the exclusion of faith and grace, or as substitutes for them, it may afford an opening for the pious advocate to show the difference between the principle and its consequence, the root and its produce. He should charitably remember that it is one thing for an honest inquirer to come short of truth, and another for a petulent caviller to wander wide of it. It is one thing to err through mistake or timidity, and another to offend through wilfulness and presumption. If the inquirer be of the former class, only deficient, and not malignant, he may be brought to feel his deficiency, and is often in a very improveable state. It would therefore be well to let him see that you think him right as far as he goes, but that he does not go the whole length. If he professes 'to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,' this is no small step: yet he may still require to be convinced that it is 'by the grace of God teaching him.' Here the two ideas expressed by your term of grace, and his of virtue, are brought into united action, with this difference, or if you please with this agreement, that your's being the cause, and his the effect, the Christian character attains its consummation between you. You must, however, endeavour to convince him, that though the greater includes the less, the reverse cannot be true; that faith and grace in the Christian sense involve virtue and rectitude, but virtue and rectitude in the philosophical sense desire to be excused from any connexion with faith and grace. But the offence taken at terms creates hostility at the outset, blocks up the avenues to each other's

heart, and leads men to be so filled with the things in which they differ, as to keep them in the dark as to the things in which they agree.

The more strict disputant will perhaps continue to insist that no such terms as virtue and rectitude are to be found in any Evangelist. Granted. Neither do we find there some other solemn words expressive of the most awful verities of our religion. The holy *Trinity* and the *satisfaction* made by the death of Christ, are not, I believe, in any part of the New Testament expressed by these terms, which were first used some ages after in the Byzantine church. But can it be said that the things themselves are not to be found there? They are not only conspicuous in every part of the Gospel, but make up the sum and substance of what it teaches.

While each disputant then contends for his own phrases, let not the one suspect that grace and faith are the watch words of enthusiasm; nor the other conclude that infidelity skulks behind virtue, and pagan pride behind rectitude. St. Paul expressly exhorts his converts to 'add to their faith virtue,' and if the inverted injunction was never given, it was not because faith was unnecessary where virtue previously existed, but because virtue, Christian virtue, never could have existed at all without previous faith. In enjoining virtue, the Apostle, upon his own uniform principle, supposes the Christian to be already in possession of faith; this he ever considers the essential substance, virtue the inseparable appendage. Thus the divine preacher on the Mount, in his prohibition of an hypocritical outside, does not say, Give alms, fast, pray; he concluded that his followers were already in the practice of those duties, and on this conviction grounded his cautionary exhortation *when* thou doest alms, *when* thou prayest, *when* thou fastest. He taught them to avoid all ostentation in duties, to which he alluded as already established. Be it observed—by the Saviour himself no attribute is so constantly enjoined or commanded as faith. His previous question to those who resorted to him to be cured, was not if they had *virtue* but *faith*; but never let it be forgotten, that as soon as the cure was performed, the man of faith was enjoined, as the surest evidence of his virtue, *to sin no more.*

CHAP. XIII.

Humility the only true greatness.

Humility is one of those qualities of which Christianity requires the perpetual practical exercise. It does not insist that we should be feeding or instructing others—that we should be every moment engaged in acts of benevolence to our fellow creatures, or of mortification to ourselves: but, whether we teach or are taught, whether communicate our good things to others, or are dependant on others for the communication to ourselves, humility is required as the invariable, the indispensable, the habitual grace, in the life of a Christian. Pride being the radical distemper of the natural man; the business, the duty, the blessedness of the spiritual man is to be freed from it.

However valuable high intellectual attainments have been found in the vindication of religion, however beneficially talents and learning have been exerted in adducing the evidences and augmenting the illustration of divine truth, yet for the most striking exemplification of genuine piety, 'To this man will I look, saith the Lord, who is of an humble spirit.' Christianity gives a new form to the virtues, by recasting them in this mould. Humility may be said to operate on the human character like the sculptor, who, in chiseling out the statue, accomplishes his object, not by laying on, but by pairing off, not by making extraneous additions, but by retrenching superfluities; till every part of the redundant material is cleared away. The reduction which true religion effects, of swelling passions, irregular thoughts, and encumbering desires, produces at length on the human mind some assimilation to the divine image—that model by which it works—as the human resemblance is gradually, and at length successfully, wrought in the marble.

Christianity, though equally favourable to the loftiest as to the lowest condition of life, was not intended to make man great, but to make him contented to be little. Though no enemy to the possession and cultivation of the highest mental powers, but affording, on the contrary, the noblest objects for their investigation, and the richest materials for their exercise; yet she rests not her truth on their discussion, nor depends for making her way to the heart on their reasonings. While the cheering approbation of an humble faith is an encouragement repeatedly held out in the Gospel, there, is not one commendation of talent, except for its application—not the least notice of rank or riches, except to intimate their danger—not any mention of the wisdom of this world, except to pronounce its condemnation.

Humility stands at the head of the beatitudes, and incorporated with them all. And the gracious injunction, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,' is a plain intimation, that our Redeemer particularly intended that portion of his own divine character for the most immediate object, not of our admiration only, but of our imitation.—It is the temper which of all others he most frequently commends, most uniformly enjoins, and which his own pure and holy life most invariably exhibits. If we look into the Old Testament, we see that God, after having described himself as 'the high and holy One which inhabiteth eternity,' by a transition the most unexpected, and a condescension the most inconceivable, immediately subjoins, that 'He dwelleth with the contrite and the humble; and this from a motive inexpressibly gracious, 'to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'

Is it not incredible, that after these repeated declarations and examples of the Almighty Father, and of the Eternal Son, pride should still be thought a mark of greatness, an ebullition of

spirit; and that humility should be so little understood to be the true moral dignity of Christians? While in the religion which they profess, there is no excellence to which it is not preliminary, and of which it is not the crown; nor are other virtues genuine but as they are accompanied with this grace, and performed in this spirit. No quality has acquired its perfection, till it is clarified and refined by being steeped in humility.

It is indeed essential to the very reception of Christianity, for, without this principle, we shall be disposed to cavil at divine revelation, to reject, at least, every truth revolting to human pride; we shall require other ground for the belief in God than his revealed word, other evidence of his veracity than the internal conviction of our spiritual wants, and the suitableness of that remedy which the Gospel presents to us. This principle, therefore, is indispensable; without it, we shall be little inclined cordially to receive Christianity as a light, or to obey it as a rule. Without it we shall not discover the evil of our own hearts; and without this discovery, we shall by no means value the grace of the Holy Spirit; we shall exercise no habitual dependance on the promised assistance, nor seek for a support of which we do not feel the want.

But humility, by leading us to form a just estimate of ourselves, teaches us to discern the narrowness of our capacities. It reminds us, that there are many things even in the works of God's natural creation far above our comprehension; that from the ignorance and blindness of our minds we make frequent mistakes, and form a very erroneous judgment about things comparatively obvious and intelligible. This temper will bring us to credit with fuller cordiality the testimony which God in his word gives of himself, and cure us of the vanity of rejecting it, on the mere ground that we cannot comprehend it. It will deliver us from the desire of being—'wise above what is written,' and is the sole antidote to the perils of that promise of unhallowed knowledge, with which the grand seducer tempted his first credulous victim.

It is not till humility has practically made known to us how slowly religion produces its effects on ourselves, that we cease to marvel at its feeble influence and slow-paced efficacy on those around us. As a consequence, this principle leads the humble Christian to be severe in judging himself, and disposes him to be candid in judging others. When he compares himself with worse men, it furnishes a motive, not for vanity, but gratitude; when with better for additional self-abasement.

St. Paul seems to have been fully aware of the lagging movement which even Christians make towards the complete attainment of this heavenly temper. In his address to the Colossians, after having expressed his firm hope of their sincere conversion, in that they had 'put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,' he yet finds it expedient to exhort them; and, for this very reason, 'to put on,' together with other christian qualities which he enumerates, 'humbleness of mind.'

He might have pressed this duty under the supposition of two cases, and, in either, the injunction would be just. As they had made a public profession of Christianity, he intimates, that there was no surer way of evincing that their profession was sincere, and their conversion radical, than by this unequivocal mark, the cultivation of an humble spirit. Or, on the other hand, however deeply rooted they might be in faith and piety, he might feel it necessary to remind them, that they should not consider themselves as having attained a perfection which left no room for improvement. So far was this deep proficient in divine wisdom from thinking that all was done when the convert had entered on his new course, he enjoins them, ever after this effectual change, that they should, as a consequence as well as a proof, *therefore*, 'put on' this christian grace; and produces their conversion as a motive, '*because* you are already renewed.' He does not recommend any specific act, so much as a general disposition of 'mind,' implying, according to his uniform practice, that growth was necessary to life, and progress to perfection.

The doctrines of Christianity, and the discourses of its divine Author, are rather pointed against certain radical evil principles, than extended to their lesser ramifications. When the powerful artillery of the Gospel was more especially levelled against the strong holds of pride, it included in the attack all the minor offences resulting from it; implying, that if the citadel be conquered, the intimidated forces in the outworks will make but a feeble resistance.

Even the worldly and the careless, who are perhaps too inattentive to perceive that humility is the predominating feature in the truly religious character, as well as the most amiable and engaging part of it, yet pay it a sort of involuntary homage in adopting its outward appearance. Many among the more elegant classes of society, who cannot be brought to adopt the principle, assume the form, as the most unequivocal mark of their superior condition. But while the well-bred exhibit the polished exterior of humility in *manner*, they are called, as Christians, to cultivate the inward and spiritual grace. In spite of the laws against egotism which the code of good breeding has issued, a nearer intimacy sometimes discloses the self-satisfaction which politeness had thinly veiled. While we are prone to carry our virtues in our memory, we cannot be always on our guard against producing them in our conversation. Such virtues, for the most part popular ones, caught our taste perhaps from the applause with which they were received, or the eloquence with which they were set forth in our presence: and as we acquired them in public, and by hearing and reading, we shall be contented to exercise them in profession and talk. Many, and very many of these qualities may be grafted on the old stock, and look green and flourishing, whilst they 'have no root in themselves;' but genuine humility springs out of a root deeply fixed in the soil of a renewed heart, and takes its first ground on the full conviction of our apostacy from God.

As we make a proficiency in this humbling knowledge of ourselves, our confidence in our own virtues proportionably diminishes. The de-

light we once received in the contemplation is first abated by self-distrust, and finally abolished by self-acquaintance.—Then we begin to profit by the deep sense of our own weakness, and to send forth the genuine fruits of a strength and a virtue derived from higher sources. And thus, the sound conviction of our own frailty, though purchased at the expense of a great error, may prove, if we might venture to say it, of more real benefit to our own mind, than the performance of a splendid action, if of that action all the use we had made had been to repose added confidence in our own strength, or to entertain higher notions of our own goodness.

Yet, while we ought to be deeply humbled at every fresh detection of evil in our hearts, to be discouraged at the discovery from proceeding in our Christian course is so far from being an effect of humility, that it is rather the result of pride. The traveller who meets with a fall, does not recover his ground by lying still and lamenting, but by rising and pursuing his journey. Joined with this faulty despondency, or still more frequently preceding it, is to be traced the operation of a blind and morbid pride. Particularly, if the intimation of the fault we have committed comes from others, the heart is found to rise at the bare suggestion that we are not perfect. We had perhaps been guilty of a hundred faults before, of which, as others took no notice, they made little impression on ourselves. We commit a smaller error, which draws the eyes of the world upon us, and we are not only dejected but almost hopeless. The eye of God was equally witness to our preceding faults, yet from their being secret, they produced little compunction, while that which is obvious to human inspection produces sorrow on the mere ground of producing shame. Perhaps we were permitted to fall into this more notorious error that we might be brought to advert to those of which we had been so little sensible; and though the depression consequent upon this fault is rather the consciousness of mortified pride, than of pious contrition, yet God may make use of it to awaken us to a feeling of our general corruptions, to warn us not to depend on ourselves, and to put us on our guard against 'secret faults,' as well as against open and 'presumptuous sins.'

Even a good man is not entirely exempt from the danger of occasional elation of spirit; even a good man does not always judge himself so rigorously as he ought; yet, though he makes too many partial allowances, is too much disposed to softenings and abatements, to apologies and deductions, still he is, on the whole, suspicious of himself, distrustful of his own rectitude, on his guard against habitual aberrations from humility. Though tremblingly alive to kindness, his sincerity makes him almost ready to regret commendation, because his enlightened conscience tells him, that if the panegyrist knew him as he knows himself, it would have been bestowed with much abatement; and he is little elated with the praise which is produced by ignorance and mistake.—Though he has fewer faults than some others, yet, as he must know more of himself than he can know of them, his humility will teach him to bear patiently even the censure he does not deserve, conscious how much he does deserve for faults which the censurer cannot know.

There is, however, no humility in an excessive depreciation of ourselves. We are not commanded to take a false estimate of our own character, though a low would be too frequently a just one. While the great Apostle St. Peter was contented to call himself *the servant of Jesus Christ*, his self-constituted successors, by an hyperbole of self-abasement, have denominated themselves *servants of the servants of God*. And yet they have not, it is to be feared, *always* surpassed the disciple they profess to follow, in the display of this apostolic grace.

Nor is the appearance of this quality any infallible proof of its existence. Nothing is more common than to hear affability to the poor produced as an undoubted evidence of the humility of the affluent. The act, indeed, is always amiable, whatever be the motive; but still the expression is equivocal. Does it not sometimes too much resemble that septennial exhibition of humility which calls forth so much smiling condescension from the powerful, while it conveys 'an hour's importance to the poor man's heart?' The one enjoys the brief, but keen delight, of reviling his superiors with impunity, with the better gratification of conferring favours instead of receiving them; the other, like Dryden's Achitophel, 'bowing popularly low,' wins by his courtesy, that favour, which he would not perhaps have obtained by his merit. But the curtain soon closes on the personated scene:—the next day, both fall back into their natural character and condition. The periodical condescension at once reinstates itself into seven year's dignity, while the *independent elector* cheerfully resumes his place in his *dependent* class, till the next Saturnalia again invite to the reciprocal exchange of character.

Where the difference of condition is obviously great, nothing is lost, and something may be gained by familiarity: the condescension is so apparent, that though it properly excites both admiration and gratitude in the indigent, it does not infallibly prove the lowliness of the superior. The impassable gulf which separates the two conditions, the immoveable fences which establish that distance, preserve the poor from encroachment, and the rich from derogation: no swellings of heart arise against the acknowledged dependant, no dread of emulation against the avowed inferior. Even arrogance itself is gratified at seeing its train augmented by so amiable a thing as its own kindness. Notice is richly repaid by panegyric, and condescension finds it has only stooped to rise.—If we give pleasure in order to be paid with praise, we had better be less liberal that we might be less exacting. The discreetly proud are aware, that arrogant manners bar up men's hearts against them; their very pride, therefore, preserves them from insolence; the determined object being to gain hearts, and their good sense telling them that a haughty demeanor is not the way to gain them, they know how to make the exterior affable in proportion as the mind is high; for the ingenuity of pride has taught it, that popularity is only to be obtained by concealing the most offensive part of itself. Thus it can retain its

nature and gratify its spirit, without the arrogant display by which vulgar pride disgusts, and, by disgusting, loses its aim.

The true test is, how the same person feels, and how he conducts himself, towards him whose claims come in competition with his own—who treads on his heels in his pretensions, or surpasses him in his success—who is held up as his rival in genius, in reputation, in fortune, in display—who runs the race with him and outstrips him. More severe will be the test, when the competitor is 'his own familiar friend,' who was his equal, perhaps his inferior, in the contest for academical honours, but is now a more fortunate candidate for the prizes which the world distributes, or his decided conqueror on the professional Arena.

His humility is put to the trial, when he hears another extolled for the very quality on which he most values himself—commended for something in which he would, if he dared, monopolize commendation—it is tried when he sees that a man of merit has prospered in an enterprise in which *he* has failed, or when he is called upon for the magnanimity to acknowledge one who, though below him in general character, is still his superior in this particular respect—it is, when, in some individual instance, this competitor has promoted the public good by a means which *he* had declared to be totally inapplicable to the end.

The true Christian will be humble in proportion to the splendor of his endowments. Humility does not require him to stupify or disavow his understanding, and thus disqualify or indispose him for great active duties. If he possesses talents, he is not unconscious of them, but, instead of exulting in the possession, he is abased that he has not turned them to better account, he is habitually thinking how he can most essentially serve God with his own gift. Sensible that he owes every thing to his divine Benefactor, he feels that he has not made him the return to which he was bound, and that his gratitude bears little proportion to his mercies; so that the very review of his abilities and possessions, which inflates the hearts of others, only deepens his humility, only fills his mind with a fuller sense of his own defect of love and thankfulness. Every distinction, instead of intoxicating him, only augments his sense of dependence, magnifies his weight of obligation, increases his feeling of accountableness. His humility has a double excitement: he receives every blessing as the gift of God though the merits of his Son; it is increased by the reflection, that such is his unworthiness, he dares not even supplicate the mercy of his Creator but through the intercession of a Mediator: 'where is boasting then? it is excluded.'—Not only on account of any good he may have, but also on account of evils from which he has been preserved, he acknowledges himself indebted to divine assistance; so that his escapes and deliverances, as well as his virtues and successes, are subjects of gratitude rather than of self-exultation.

It will not be departing from the present object, if we contrast the quality under consideration with its opposite. While humility is never at variance with itself, pride is a very inconsistent principle. It knows not only how to assume the garb of the attribute to which it is opposed, but even descends to be abject, which humility never is. Consider it on one side, nothing is so self-supported; survey it on the other, you will perceive that nothing is so dependent, so full of claims, so exacting, so incapable of subsisting on itself. It is made up of extrinsic appendages; it leads a life of mendicity; it stoops to beg the alms of other men's good opinion for its daily bread. It is true, the happiness of a proud man, if he have rank, arises from an idea of his own importance; but still, to feed and maintain this greedy self-importance, he must look around him. His pleasures are derived, not so much from his personal enjoyments as from his superiority to others; not so much from what he possesses, as from the respect his possessions inspire. As he cannot entirely support his feelings of greatness by what he finds in himself; he supplies the deficiency by looking backward to his ancestors, and downward upon his train.—With all his self-consequence, he is reduced to borrow his dignity from the merits of the one, and the numbers of the other. By thus multiplying himself, he feels not only individually, but numerically, great. These foreign aids and adjuncts help him to enlarge the space he fills in his own imagination, and he is meanly contented to be admired for what is, in effect, no part of himself.—This sentiment is, however, by no means limited to rank or riches.

If the penury of pride drives it to seek its aliment in the praise of others, it is chiefly because we want their good opinion to confirm us in that which we have of ourselves. When we secretly indulge in reckoning up the testimonies we have collected to our worth, it is because we like to bring as many witnesses as we can muster, that we may have their approving verdict in additional proof that our judgment was right. In fact, we think better of ourselves in proportion as we contrive to make more people think well of us. But, however large the circle which 'high imaginations' draw round the individual self in the centre, we can really occupy no more than our allotted space; we may indeed change our position, but, in shifting it, we fill no more than we fillled already, for by the removal we lose as much as we gain.

It is an humbling truth, that the most powerful talents are not seldom accompanied with vehement passions, that a brilliant imagination is too frequently associated with ungoverned appetites. Neither human reason, nor motives merely moral, are commonly found to keep these impetuous usurpers in order; the strength of men's passions tempting them to violate the rules which the strength of their judgment has laid down.—Nature cannot operate without its own sphere. What is natural in the intellect, will not, of itself, govern what is natural in the appetite. If the lower part of our nature is subdued, it is not without the holy Spirit assisting the higher. Wit, especially has such a tendency to lead astray the mind which it embellishes, that it is a striking evidence of the efficacy of grace, when men, whose shining talents make virtue lovely in the eyes of others, reject themselves 'high thoughts engendering pride' when

they, on whose lips the attention of others hangs with delight, can, themselves, by this divinely infused principle, 'bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.'

There is no quality so ready to suspect, and so prompt to accuse, as that which we are considering; there is no fault which a proud man so readily charges upon others as pride; especially if the person accused possess those distinctions and accomplishments, the possession of which would make the accuser proud. Men full of themselves, are disposed to fancy others deficient in attention to them; and as it never occurs to them why those attentions are withheld, they have no other way of accounting for the neglect, but to charge the neglector with being envious of their qualities, or vain of his own. With that deep humility, which is the ground-work of his profession, the Christian alone attains to real dignity of character. If we reckon those men great who rise high, and make a distinguished figure in the world, how much higher is his claim to greatness who looks down on what the others glory in; who views with indifference the things to which the world accounts it greatness to aspire, and the consummation of greatness to attain.

The proud man, by not cordially falling in with the Christian scheme—which, if he thoroughly adopted, would shrink to nothing these bloated fancies—contracts, in effect, the duration of his existence, and reduces to almost nothing the sphere in which his boasted dignity is to be exercised. The theatre on which he is satisfied to act, is limited to the narrow stage of this world; and even on this vanishing scene, how far are the generality from being considerable actors! Pride, therefore, is something worse than fatuity, for whether the stake be high or low, it is sure to play a losing game. It is difficult to say which lot will be most terrible; his, who, having performed an obscure and painful part in this short drama, and having neglected to seek that kingdom promised to the poor in spirit, closes his life and hopes together; or his, who, having had a conspicuous part assigned him here, submits, when the curtain drops, not merely to be nothing: but oh! how much worse than nothing! Absorbed in the illusions and decorations of this shifting spectacle, or intoxicated with the plaudits of the spectators, the interminable scenes which lie beyond the grave, though, perhaps, not absolutely disbelieved, have been totally neglected to be taken into his brief reckoning.

Now, if pride were really a generous principle, if its tumour were indeed greatness, surely the soul which entertains it would exert its energies on a grand scale! If ambition were indeed a noble sentiment, would it not be pointed to the noblest objects; would it not be directed to the sublimest end? Would not the mind which is filled with it, achieve a loftier flight? Would it stoop to be cooped up within the scanty precincts of a perishing world? True ambition would raise its votary above the petty projects which every accident may overturn, and every breath destroy; which a few months *may*, and a few years *must*, terminate. It would set him upon reflecting, that all the elevation of intellect, all the depth of erudition, all the superiority of rank, all the distinction of riches is only held by the attenuated thread that attaches him to this world—a world which is itself 'hung upon nothing.' True ambition would instruct him, that he is not really great who is not great for eternity—that to know the height and depth, the length and breadth, of the knowledge of God, and of his eternal love in Christ Jesus, is the consummation of all knowledge, the top of all greatness, the substance of all riches, the sum of all wisdom; that the only object sufficiently capacious to satisfy the grasping desires, to fill the hungering soul of man, is that immortality which is brought to light by the Gospel. That state which has God for its portion, and eternity for its duration, is alone commensurate to the grandeur of a soul redeemed by the blood of Christ. This holy ambition would show him, that there is a littleness in whatever has boundaries—a penury in every thing of which we can count the value—an insignificance in all of which we perceive the end.

Let it, then, ever be considered as a destitution of true greatness, practically to blot out eternity from its plan. As a consequence, let that be truly designated 'the wisdom from above,' which makes eternity the grand feature in the aspect of our existence. And this ambition, be it remembered, is the exclusive property of the humble Christian. *His* desires are illimitable—*he* disdains the scanty bounds of time—*he* leaps the narrow confines of space. He it is who monopolizes ambition. *His* aims soar a bolder flight—*his* aspirations are sustained on a stronger pinion—*his* views extend to an immeasurable distance—*his* hopes rest in an interminable duration.

Yet if his felicity does not, like that of secular ambition, depend on popular breath, still it subsists on dependence. It subsists upon a trust which never disappoints—upon a mercy which is never exhausted—upon a promise which never deceives—upon the strength of an arm which 'scattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts'—on a benignity which 'exalteth the meek and humble'—on a liberality, which, in opposition to worldly generosity, 'fills the hungry alone with good things,' and which, contrary to human vanity, sends only 'the rich empty away.'

Humility is an attribute of such antipathy to the original constitution of our nature, that no principle can possibly produce it in its full extent, and bring it to its complete maturity, but that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No spirit short of this can enable us to submit our understanding, to subdue our will, to resign our independence, to renounce ourselves.

This principle not only teaches us to bow to the authority and yield to the providence of God, but inculcates the still harder lesson of submitting to be saved in the only way He has appointed—a way which lays pride in the dust. If even, in the true servants of God, this submission is sometimes interrupted—if we too naturally recede from it—if we too reluctantly return to it, it is still owing to the remains of pride, the master sin; a sin too slowly discarded even from the renewed nature. This partial

conquest of the stubborn will, this imperfect resignation, this impeded obedience, even in the real Christian, is an abiding proof that we want farther humbling, a mortifying evidence that our hearts are not yet completely brought under the dominion of our principles.

CHAP. XIV.

On Retirement.

An old French wit says, that 'ambition itself might teach us to love retirement, as there is nothing which so much hates to have companions.' Cowley corrects this sentiment with one equally lively and more sound, that 'ambition, indeed, detests to have company on either side, but delights above all things in a train behind, and ushers before.' To seek therefore a retreat till we have got rid of this ambition, to fly to retirement as a scene of pleasure or improvement, till the love of the world is eradicated from the heart, or at least till this eradication is its predominant desire, will only conduct the discontented mind to a long train of fresh disappointments, in addition to that series of vexations of which it has so constantly complained in the world.

The amiable writer already referred to, who has as much unaffected elegance and good sense in his prose works, as false taste and unnatural wit in his poetry, seems not to be quite accurate when he insists in favour of his beloved solitude that 'a minister of state has not so much business in public as a wise man has in private; the one,' says he, 'has but part of the affairs of one nation, the other has all the works of God and nature under his consideration. But surely there is a manifest difference between our having great works under our consideration, and having them under our control. He assigns, indeed, high motives for the purposes of retreat, but he does not seem to assign the highest. Should he not have added in conjunction with the objects he enumerates, what should be the leading object of the retirement of the good man, the study of his own heart, as well as of inanimate nature; of the world, as well as of the works of God?

He who has spent his life in the study of mankind, till he is weary both of the study and of its object, will, with a justly framed mind, be well prepared for retirement. He will delight in it as an occasion for cultivating a more intimate acquaintance with his Maker and with himself. He will seek it not merely as the well-earned reward of a life of labour, but as a scene, which, while it advances his present comfort, furnishes him with better means of preparing for a better life. We often hear of the necessity of being qualified for the world; and this is the grand object in the education of our children, overlooking the difficult duty of qualifying them for retirement. But if part of the immense pains which are taken to fit them for the company of others, were employed in fitting them for their own company, in teaching them the duties of solitude as well as of society, this earth would be a happier place than it is; a training suitable to a world of such brief duration, would be a better preparatory study for a world which will have no end.

Leisure with dignity is a classic phrase which carries to the taste and to the heart the mingled ideas of repose, elegance, and literature. It is, indeed, an honourable state of enjoyment. It has been sung by the poet, and extolled by the philosopher. Its delights have been echoed by those who seek it, and by those that shun it; by those who desire its possession, and by those who are satisfied with its praise; by those who found their fondness on a happy experience, and by those who had rather admire than enjoy it.

Tumult, indeed, is to be avoided as a great impediment to that interior peace, without which outward stillness is of little value. But let us bear in mind that it is more easy to escape from the tumult of the world than of the passions. Before, therefore, we expect immunity from care in our projected retreat, let us inquire what is our object in retiring. We may deceive ourselves in this pursuit as we have done in others. We may fancy we are retiring from motives of religion, when we are only seeking a more agreeable mode of life. Or we may be flying, from duty, when we fancy we are flying from temptation. We may flatter ourselves we are seeking the means of piety, when we are only running away from the perplexities of our situation; from trials which make, perhaps a part of our duty. To dislike these is natural; to desire to escape from them is innocent, generally laudable. Only let us not persuade ourselves that we are influenced by one motive when we are acting from another. The design may be even good, but let us not deceive ourselves with the idea of its being better than it is. Let us not boast that we are making a sacrifice to duty, when we are consulting, however innocently, our own ease or convenience. In retreating into the country for peace of mind, the temper you would find you must carry thither. Those who retire on no other principle but to escape trouble without turning their leisure to the benefits it is calculated to impart, are happy only on the low condition of being useless. If we retire upon the motive of 'Soul take thine ease,' though neither covetousness nor sensuality be the prompting principle, if our object be a slothful indulgence, a retirement which does not involve benefit to others, as well as improvement to ourselves, we fail of the great purpose for which we came into the world, for which we withdrew from it.

But while we advert to the highest object as the best, we are far from insinuating that the taste, especially so right a taste, may not be indulged from motives of an inferior nature; far from thinking that we are not justified in preferring a tranquil to a bustling scene, and adopting a more rational, even if it be not a more religious plan of life. There is something almost like virtue in the good taste which prefers it; only, that as in intellectuals, good taste must have its substratum in good sense, so in morals it should have its substratum in principle. But if any one thinks that merely by retiring from

the world, he shall get rid of his own evil tempers, solitude is the worst choice he could make. It may indeed, through the grace of God, be made eventually beneficial; for though his interior burthen, so far from being lightened, will be more oppressively felt, yet its very oppressiveness, by leading him to look into the cause, may lead to its removal; he may be drawn to religion to get rid of himself, as he was driven to retirement to get rid of his cares.

No second causes act but by the direction of the first. The visible works of God, though so admirably calculated to stir up devotion in the heart, have not commonly, especially when habit makes them familiar, been found to produce this effect. Some of the school divines made a just distinction, when they compared inanimate and intelligent beings, in reference to the supreme Creator, by saying that the one only exhibit the footsteps of God, while the other represent his face.

It was worthy of the munificence of omnipotent Bounty, not only to spread the earth with a rich profusion of whatever is necessary and pleasant to animate life, but with whatever might invite to contemplative and intellectual life; not only to sustain but to gratify; not only to nourish but to improve: by endless variety, awakening curiosity, and by curiosity exciting research. The country is favourable to the study of natural history; furnishing both the leisure and the materials. It sets the mind upon thinking, that if the objects of God's creation are so wonderful, *Himself how wondrous then!*

The mind, indeed, which is looking out for good, finds 'sermons in stones, and good in every thing.' To minds of an opposite make, use destroys the effect, even if novelty had produced it. Little habituated to reflection, they soon learn to behold a grove of oaks with no higher feeling than a street of shops, and are as little soothed with the murmurs of a rivulet, as with the clatter of hackney coaches. Where sloth predominates in the character, we are disposed to consider the retreat from which we had promised ourselves so much advantage, as furnishing a refuge for idleness rather than a place for reflection. If vanity and vivacity predominate, we shall value the loveliest scenery we have been embellishing, rather as means to attract company and commendation, that as a help to assist our better thoughts, and lift our hearts to holy aspirations.

Though piety is no local thing, yet it has locality. That being is but a bad authority whom Milton makes proudly to exclaim, 'The mind is its own place,' and the Stoics carried their haughty mental independence too far, in asserting that local circumstances made no difference in the condition of man. Retirement is assuredly favourable to the advancement of the best ends of our being. There the soul has freer means of examining into its own state, and its dependence upon God. It has more unobstructed leisure for enjoying with its Maker,

> Communion sweet, communion large and high,

It has ampler means for reiterating the consecration of its powers and faculties to him who gave them, than it could easily find in those broken snatches and uncertain intervals which busier scenes afforded. But then we must be brought into a state and condition to reap benefit from retreat. The paralytic might as reasonably expect to remove his disease by changing his position, as the discontented to allay the unruly motions of a distempered mind merely by retiring into the country.

A great statesman, whom many of us remember, after having long filled a high official situation with honour and ability, began at length impatiently to look forward to the happy period when he should be exonerated from the toils of office. He pathetically lamented the incessant interruptions which distracted him, even in the intervals of public business. He repeatedly expressed to a friend of the author, how ardently he longed to be discharged from the oppressive weight of his situation, and to consecrate his remaining days to repose and literature. At length one of those revolutions in party, which so many desire, and by which so few are satisfied, transferred him to the scene of his wishes. He flew to his rural seat, but he soon found that the sources to which he had so long looked, failed in their power of conferring the promised enjoyment; his ample park yielded him no gratification but what it had yielded him in town, without the present drawback; there he had partaken of his venison without the incumbrance of its solitude. His Hamadryads, having no despatches to present, and no votes to offer, soon grew insipid. The stillness of retreat became insupportable; and he frankly declared to the friend above alluded to, that such was to him the blank of life, that the only relief he ever felt was to hear a rap at the door. Though he had before gladly snatched the little leisure of a hurried life for reading, yet when life became all leisure, books had lost their power to interest. Study could not fill a mind long kept on the stretch by great concerns in which he himself had been a prime mover. The history of other times could not animate a spirit habitually quickened by a strong personal interest in actual events.—There is a quality in our nature strongly indicative that we were formed for active and useful purposes. These, though of a calmer kind, may be still pursued in retirement under the influence of the only principle powerful enough to fill the heart which fancies itself emptied of the world. Religion is that motive yet quieting principle, which alone delivers a man from perturbation in the world, and inanity in retirement; without it, he will in the one case be hurried into impetuosity, or in the other be sunk into stagnation. But religion long neglected 'will not come when you do call for it.' Perhaps the noble person did not call.

It is an obvious improvement in the taste and virtue of the present day, that so many of our dictators retire, not to the *turf*, but to the *plough*; that they make an honourable and pleasant exchange of the cares and vexations of political life for the tranquil and useful pursuits of agriculture. Such pursuits yield comparative repose, and produce positive good. Besides this, the modern Cincinnatus will have the gratifica-

tion of finding how much he has gained by the change in his choice of instruments, for he will see that 'all sheep and oxen, yea and all beasts of the field,' are far less perverse, faithless and intractable than the indocile human agents whom he has been so long labouring to break in, and bring under the yoke.

But whatever he may have gained in these respects, if the philosophical and political agriculturist do not make it part of his arrangement, as we hope he does, that the cultivation of personal piety shall divide his time and his thoughts with the cultivation of his paternal acres, he will not find his own passions more tractable, his own appetites more subdued, his own tempers better regulated, because the theatre in which they are exercised is changed from contentious senates to blooming meadows. There is no power in the loveliest scenery to give that character to the mind on which its peace depends. It is true his innocent occupations will divert ambition, but it requires a more powerful operation to cure it. Ambition is an intermittent: it may, indeed, be cooled, but without piety it will be cooled as the patient in an ague is cooled 'in the well day between the two fits,' he will be looking back on the fever he has escaped, and forward to that which he is anticipating. There is but one tonic powerful enough to prevent the return of the paroxysm. He will find the perusal of the Bible not less compatible than that of the Georgics with this interesting occupation. While he is actually enjoying the lovely living images under which the inspired writers represent the most delightful truths of religion, he may realize the analogies intellectually, he may be, indeed, conducted 'to green pastures' and led beside 'the still waters of comfort' in the highest sense of those beautiful metaphors.

What a blessing is it to mankind, when they, whose large domains confer on them such extensive local influence, give their views a wider range, and take in an ampler compass of beneficial patronage; when they crown their exertions for the public good by the pious education of their young dependants, by promoting the growth of Christianity as assiduously as the breed of sheep; by extending the improvement of the soil to the moral cultivation of those whom Providence, having committed to their protection for that very purpose, will require at their hands.

With the deepest gratitude to God, let it be observed how many of these great persons, with a spirit more honourable to them than their coronets or any earthly distinctions, have stood forward as the avowed patrons of the noble Institution for dispersing the Bible into all countries, after having transfused it into every dialect of every language. When we consider the object, and view the rapidity, and trace the success, are we not almost tempted to fancy that we see the Angel in the Revelation flying in the midst of heaven, carrying 'the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell in the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.'*

* May an old and attached member of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge be allowed to offer her opinion (though irrelevant to the subject of this chapter,) upon the complete establishment of the argument in favour of the Bible Society, from its not injuring its venerable predecessor? It is now obvious that the benefits of the new institution are effected without detriment to the old, from its having excited fresh friends to its cause, and raised additional funds for its support. Reasoning indeed from analogy, would the benefactor, whose means were competent to both, refuse his patronage to the Middlesex Hospital, because he was already a subscriber to St. George's? When he saw that other contributors neither withdrew nor diminished, but especially when he saw that they augmented their bounty to the elder establishment, would he not bid God speed to the younger? Would he not rejoice that a new source was opened for healing *more* diseases, for relieving *more* wants? In the distribution of the Bible, are not both institutions streams issuing from the same fountain of love, both flowing into the same ocean of good? If we may be allowed the application, 'they are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit;' 'they are differences of administration, but it is the same God that worketh all in all.'

It is indeed a spectacle to warm the coldest and to soften the hardest heart, to behold men of the first rank and talents, statesmen who have never met but to oppose each other, orators who have never spoken but to differ, each strenuous in what is presumed he believes right, renouncing every interfering interest, sacrificing every jarring opinion, forgetting all in which they differed, and thinking only on that in which they agree; each *reconciled to his brother and leaving his gift at the altar*, offering up every resentment at the foot of the Cross! There might be two opinions how men should be governed, there can be but one—whether they should be saved.

We ought not to doubt that a portion of that generous zeal with which they disseminate the word of life to others, will be exerted in increasing their own personal acquaintance with it. To dispense the grand instrument of salvation to others, forgetful of our own interest in it, is one of the few instances in which disinterestedness would be criminal: while here to participate in the blessing we bestow, is one of the rare occasions in which self-love is truly honourable. May we, without offence, without the remotest idea of any thing personal, hazard the observation that it is possible to be made the instrument, not only of temporal, but eternal, good to others, without reaping ourselves any advantage from the good we communicate?

It might have supplied a thesis for disputation among the whimsical subtleties of the old school divines, which was the more blameable extreme, to possess the Bible ourselves without imparting the blessing to others, or to communicate it to them without using it ourselves. Unfortunately however, the cause for casuistry was cut short, by their refusing the Bible altogether to the laity.

It is with reluctance we turn from subjects of grateful panegyric to those presented to us by the same class of society for animadversion. With regret we take leave of scenes enriched and dignified by the beneficial presence and exertions of their lords, for the dreary prospect of deserted mansions and abdicated homes. To not a few of the rich and the great, their magnificent houses are rather a cumbrous appendage to grandeur, places to which strangers resort to admire the splendour of the proprietors, and the portraits of their ancestors, than what Provi-

dence intended, a rich additional ingredient in their own overflowing cup of blessings. Their seats are possessed without being enjoyed. They appear, indeed, to combine the advantages of retreat with those of opulence. But it is only appearance. Do not too many of their owners strive to dispossess the scene of every attribute appended to it: Do they not chiefly derive what little they know of the charms of the country from the descriptions of the poet—of the diversities of landscape from the painters of the opera scenes—of the delights of retirement from the moralist, the philosopher, and, more frequently, the novelist? They contrive to transfer to their rural abodes every thing of the metropolis, every moveable appendage of rural beauty. Like the imperial Roman glutton, who never tasted fish but at the farthereat possible distance from the sea, they enjoy the lovely products of the conservatory, glowing with every hue, and breathing every fragrance, any where but where they grow. The most exquisite flowers yield little delight till transported to the town residence. There they exhale their sweets amid smoky lamps, and waste them on a fetid atmosphere; exhausting their beauties in the transient festivity of a single night, instead of reserving them to decorate retreat, and add one attraction more to the charms of home and the pleasures of retirement.

With these personages, the principal change from town to country consists in the difference between a park and a square. They bring to one the same tastes, the same amusements, and the same inversion of hours which they adopted in the other. They lose the true enjoyment of both, by contriving that neither town nor country shall preserve any distinct character of its own. To some, indeed, the splendid inheritance is considered as little more than a commodious inn in which to repose in their incessant migration from the capital to the watering-place, and from the chalybeate to the sea; without having the too valid plea of attending the sick, or being sick themselves.

But if we compare the domestic scenes from which they are hurrying, with the places to which they are resorting, we are inclined to pity them on the score of taste, as much as on the loss of enjoyment. A stranger to our manners who had heard of the self-denial our religion enjoins, when he compared what they had quitted with what they are flying to, would naturally compliment them on the noble sacrifice which he would conclude they had made to duty. He would admire the zeal which prompted the abandonment of such pure for such turbid pleasures: he would admire the elevation of mind which could submit to such unimposed penance. When he followed them from the splendid mansion to the close and incommodious residence, in which a crowded season sometimes immures the possessors of palaces; when he saw them renounce their blooming gardens, their stately woods, 'trees worthy of paradise,' for unshaded walks or artificial awnings; their bowers and temples for the unsheltered beach, open to all the rage of the dog star; the dry, smooth-shaven green, for sinking sands rivalling the soil of Arabia, or burning gravel, which might emulate queen Emma's ploughshares, would he not exclaim in rapture, surely these heroic ladies submit to such privations, encounter such hardships, make such renunciations from motives of the most sublime self-denial! Doubtless they crowd to these joyless abodes, because they could find at home no distress to be relieved, no innocence to be protected, no wrongs to be redressed, no ignorance to be instructed. Now, would he exultingly add, I have some practical experience of the sacrifices of which disinterested piety is capable. The good they must be doing here is indeed a noble recompence for the pleasure they are giving up.

Unimportant as this gradual revolution in our habits may be thought, there are few things which have more contributed to lower the tone both of society and solitude, than this multiplied and ever multiplying scenes of intermediate and subordinate dissipation. When the opulent divided the year between the town and country residence—the larger portion always assigned to the latter—being stationary in each, as they occupied a post of more obvious responsibility, they were more likely to fulfill their duties, than in these parentheses between both. For these places, to persons who only seek them as scenes of diversion and not as recruits to health, are considered as furnishing a sort of suspension from duty as well as an exoneration from care: the chief value of the pleasures they afford consisting in their not being *home-made*.

We have little natural relish for serious things, It is one great aim of religion to cure this natural malady. It is the great end of dissipated pleasures to inflame it. These pleasures forcibly address themselves to the senses, and thus, not only lower the taste, but nearly efface the very idea of spiritual things. They gradually persuade their votaries, that nothing but what they receive through *their* medium is real. Where the allusions of sense are allowed to make their full impression, the pleasures of religion appear merely visionary; faint shadows at first, and afterwards unexisting things.

If religion makes out certain pleasures to be dangerous, these pleasures revenge themselves in their turn by representing religion to be dull. They are adopted under the specious notion of being a relief from more severe employments; whereas others less poignant would answer the end better, and exhaust the spirit less. If the effect of certain diversions only serves to render our return to sober duties more reluctant, and the duties themselves insipid, if not irksome—if we return to them as to that which, though we do not love, we dare not omit, it is a question even in the article of enjoyment, whether we do not lose more than we gain by any recreation which has the effect of rendering that disgusting which might otherwise have been delightful.

But it is never too late for a change of system, provided that change is not only *intended*, but *adopted*. We would respectfully invite those who have been slaves to custom, courageously to break their chain. Let them earnestly solicit the aid which is from above on their own honest exertions. Let them tear themselves from the fascinating objects which have hitherto detained them from making acquaintance with their own

hearts. It is but to submit heroically to a little dulness at first, which habit will convert into pleasure, to encounter temptation with a resistance which will soon be rewarded with victory. They will be sensible of one surprising revolution; from the period when they begin to inure themselves to their own company, they will insensibly dislike it less; not so much for the goodness they will find in themselves, as from discovering what a fund of interesting employment, of which they had been so long in search, their own hearts can furnish.

As the scrutiny becomes deeper, the improvement will become greater, till they will grow not so much to endure retirement as to rejoice in it, not so much to subsist without dissipation as to soar above it. If they are not so much diverted, they will be less discomposed. If there are fewer vanities to amuse, there will be fewer disorders to repair; there will be no longer that struggle between indulgence and regret, between enjoyment and repentance, between idleness and conscience, which distracts many amiable, but unfixed minds, who feel the right which they have not courage to pursue. There will be fewer of those inequalities which cost more pain in filling up than they afforded pleasure in creating. In their habits there will be regularity without monotony. There will be a uniform beauty in the even tissue of life; the web, though not so much spangled, will be more of a piece; if it be less glittering in patches, the design will be more elegant; if the colours are less glaring, they will wear better; their soberness will secure their permanence; if they are not gaudy when new, they will be fresh to the end.

CHAP. XV.

Dangers and advantages of retirement.

If some prefer retirement as an emancipation from troublesome duties rather than as a scene of improvement, others choose it as a deliverance from restraint, and as the surest mode of indulging their inclinations by a life of freedom; not a freedom from the dangers of the world, but of following their own will. While we continue in the active world, while our idleness is animated with bustle, decorated with splendor, and diversified with variety, we cheer our erroneous course with the promise of some day escaping from it; but when we sit down in our retreat, unprovided with the well chosen materials of which true enjoyment is alone compounded, or without proposing to dedicate our retirement to the obtaining them, we are almost in a more hopeless condition than when we lived without reflection in the world. We were then looking forward to the privacy we now enjoy, as to a scene of mental profit. We had in prospect a point which, if ever attained, would be to us the beginning of a new life, a post from which we should start in a nobler race. But the point is attained, and the end is neglected. We are set down in our ultimate position.

But retirement, from which we promised ourselves so much, has produced no change, except from the idleness of tumult to that of ennui in one sex, and from levity to apathy in the other. The active life which we had promised to turn into contemplative life is no improvement, if a gay frivolity is only transformed into a dull vacuity. In the world we were not truly active if we did little good; in retirement we are not contemplative, if contemplation is not exercised to the best purposes. It is in vain that we retire from great affairs, if our hearts are stuffed with such as are insignificant. There is less hope of a change in the mind, because there is no probability of a change in the circumstances with which this projected moral alteration used to be connected. Where the outset was froth, and the end is feculence, there may be a difference, but there is no improvement. We shall find in retirement, under new modifications, the same passions, tempers, and weaknesses, which we had proposed to leave behind us, without the same pretence of wanting time to watch against them. If we settle down in petty systematic trifling, it is not the size of the concern, but the spirit in which it is pursued, that makes the difference. The scandal of a village, the intrigues of a little provincial town may be entered into with as much warmth, and as little profit, as the more imposing follies of the metropolis.

Retirement, therefore, though so favourable to virtue, is not without its dangers. Taste, and, of course, conversation, is liable to degenerate. Intellect is not kept in exercise. We are too apt to give to insignificant topics an undue importance; to become arbitrary; to impose our opinions as laws; to contract, with a narrowness of thinking, an impatience of opposition. Yet, while we grow peremptory in our decisions, we are, at the same time, liable to individual influence; whereas, in the world, the injurious influence of one counsellor is soon counteracted by that of another; and if, from the collision of opposite sentiments, we do not strike out truth, we experience, at least, the benefit of contradiction. If those with whom we associate are of an inferior education and cast of manners, we shall insensibly lower our standard, thinking it sufficiently high, if it be above theirs, till we imperceptibly sink to their level. The author saw, very early in life, an illustration of these remarks, in a person who had figured in the ranks of literature. He was a scholar and a poet. Disappointed in his ambitious views of rising in the church, a profession for which he was little calculated, he took refuge in a country parsonage. Here he affected to make his fate his choice. On Sundays he shot over the heads of the inferior part of his audience, without touching the hearts of the better informed; and, during the week, paid himself for the world's neglect, by railing at it. He grew to dislike polished society for which he had been well qualified. He spent his mornings in writing elegies on the contempt of the world, or odes on the delights of retirement, and his evenings in the lowest sensuality with the most vulgar and illiterate of his neighbours.

Another danger is that of aspiring to become the sun of our little system, since the love of popularity is not exclusively attached to public

situations. In the world, indeed, if there be not a real, there must at least be a spurious merit to procure it, whereas, when there are no competitors, it is easy to be popular; to be admired by the uncultivated, and flattered by the dependent, may be the attainment of the most moderately gifted. Let us not, therefore, judge of ourselves by acclamations, which would equally follow the worthless, if they filled the same situation. If we do not remember to distinguish between our merit and our place, we shall receive the homage, not as a debt of gratitude or a bait for bounty, but as a tribute to excellence. From being accustomed to flattery, we shall exact it as a right; from not being opposed, we shall learn not to endure opposition.

Besides the danger of contracting supercilious habits if surrounded with inferiors, there is also that of indulging a censorious spirit on comparing our own habits with those of persons who live in the world, and of overrating our own exemption from practices, to which, from indolence, we have no inducement, and, from circumstances, no opportunity. When we compare our hearts and lives with those of whom we know little, let us not forget to compare also, with others, our situations and temptations. The comparative estimates we make in our own favour are frequently fallacious, always dangerous. Many who live in the world have a mortified spirit, while others may bring to a cloister hearts overflowing with the love of that world from which it is easier to turn our faces than to withdraw our affections.

Secluded persons are sometimes less careful to turn to profit small parcels of time, which, when put together, make no inconsiderable fund. Reckoning that they have an indefinite stock upon hand, they neglect to devote each portion to its definite purpose. The largeness of their treasure makes them negligent of small, but incessant, expenses. For instance; instead of light reading being used as a relief from severer studies, and better employments, it is too frequently resorted to as the principal expedient for getting over the tediousness of solitude; people slide into the indulgence to such an excess, that it becomes no longer the relaxation, but the business. The better studies, which were only to be relieved, are superseded; they become dull and irksome; what was once pleasure is converted into a dry duty, and the duty is become a task. From this plenitude of leisure there is also a danger of falling into general remissness. Business which may be done at any time, is, for that very reason, not done at all. The belief that we shall have opportunities enough to repair an omission, causes omissions to be multiplied.

From the *dangers* of retirement, we come now to the more pleasant topic of its *advantages*. The retired man cannot even pretend that his character must of necessity be melted down in the general mass, or cast into the general mould. He, at least, may think for himself, may form his own plans, keep his own hours, and, with little intermission, pursue his own projects. He is less enslaved to the despotism of custom, less driven about by the absurd fluctuations of fashion. His engagements and their execution depend more immediately on himself, his understanding is left unfettered, and he has less pretence for screening himself under the necessity of falling in with the popular habits when they militate against convenience and common sense.

Many of the duties of retirement are more fixed and certain, more regular in their recurrence, and obvious as to their necessity. As they are less interrupted, the neglect of them is less excusable. In the world, events and engagements succeed each other with such rapidity and pleasure, that the imagination has hardly time or incitement to exercise itself. Where all is interruption or occupation, fancy has little leisure to operate. But if, in retirement, where this faculty finds full leisure both for exercise and for chastisement; if the undisciplined mind is left entirely to its mercy, the guilt will be enhanced, and the benefit lost; it will be ever foraging for prey, and, like other marauders, instead of stopping to select, will pick up all the plunder that falls in its way, and bring in a multitude of vain thoughts to feed upon, as an indemnification for the realities of which it is deprived. The well-regulated mind, in the stated seasons devoted to the closet, should therefore severely discipline this vagrant faculty. They who do not make a good use of *these* seasons of retirement, will not be likely to make a good use of the rest. The hour of prayer or meditation is a consecration of the hours employed in the business, whether of society or solitude. In those hours we may lay in a stock of grace, which, if faithfully improved, will shed its odour on every portion of the day.

If general society contributes more to smooth the asperities of manner, to polish roughnesses, and file off sharpnesses, retirement furnishes better means for cultivating that piety which is the only genuine softener of the temper. Without this corrective, even the manners may grow austere, and the language harsh. But while the benevolent affections are kept in exercise, and the kindly offices of humanity in operation, there will be little danger that the mind will become rough and angular from the want of perpetual collision with polished bodies. The exercise of beneficence, too, in the country is accompanied with more satisfaction, as the good done is less equivocal. In great cities, and especially in the metropolis, some charitable persons chiefly content themselves with promoting public subscriptions, and superintending public charities, for want of knowing the actual degree of individual distress or the truth of private representation. Here all the advantage lies on the side of the country resident. The characters, as well as wants, of the poor, are specifically known, and certainly the immediate vicinity of the opulent has the more natural, though not the sole claim to their bounty.

Retirement is calculated to cure the great infirmity, I had almost said the mortal disease, of not being able to be alone; it is adapted to relieve the wretched necessity of perpetually hanging on others for amusement; it delivers us from the habit of depending, not only for our solace, but almost for our existence on foreign aid, and extricates us from the bondage of submitting to any sort of society in order to get rid

of ourselves. It is very useful sometimes thus to make experiments on our own minds, to strip ourselves of helps and supports, to cut off whatever is extrinsic, and, as it were, to be reduced to ourselves. We should thus learn to do without persons and things, even while we have them, that we may not feel the privation too strongly when they are not to be had. These self-denials constitute the true legitimate self-love, as the multiplying of indulgences is the surest way to mortification.

Those to whom change is remedy, and novelty gratification, though the change be for the worse, and the novelty be a loss, are the first to bewail the disappointment which every one else foresaw. We hear those complain most that they can get no quiet, whose want of it arises from the irruptions of their own passions. Peace is no local circumstance. It does not depend on the situation of the house, but of the heart. True quiet is only *to* be found in the extirpation of evil tempers, in the victory over unruly appetites; it is found not merely in the absence of temptation, but in the dominion of religion. It arises from the cultivation of that principle, which alone can effectually smooth down the swellings of pride, still the restlessness of envy, and calm the turbulence of impure desires. It depends on the submission of the will, on that peace of God which passeth all understanding, on the grace of Christ, on the consolations of the Spirit—With these blessings, which are promised to all who seek them, we may find tranquillity in Cheapside; without them we may live a life of tumult on the Eddystone.

Those who are more conversant with poetic than pious composition; who have fed their fancy with the soothing dreams of pastoral bards; who figure to themselves a state of pure felicity among the guileless beings with whom a fond imagination peoples the scene of rural life, expect when they retire into the country, to meet with a new race of mortals, pure as the fabled inhabitants of the golden age—spotless beings, who were not included in the primeval curse, creatures who have not only escaped the contamination of the world, but the original infection of sin, that sin, which they allow may be caught by contact, but which they do not know is a home-born, home-bred disease. It is indeed a most engaging vision, to associate indivisibly with the lovely scenes of nature the lovelier form of purity: but, alas! 'such scenes were never!' The groves and lawns of the country no more make men necessarily virtuous, than the brick and mortar of the church make them necessarily pious. The enthusiast of nature, while he enjoys even to rapture her unpolluted charms, must not, however, expect to find in retirement that unsullied innocence which the disappointed Cowley looked for in his retreat at Chertsey; which, after his woeful failure there, he continued to persuade himself he should find in America; which his own Claudian vainly believed might be obtained by his interesting *Old man of Verona*, on escaping from that city; which even the patriarch Lot found not, in escaping from a worse city than Verona.

Perhaps the vivid imagination of Cowley, in his eager longings for America, like that of some more recent enthusiasts, might have been kindled by the alluring appellation of the *New* World. This seducing epithet might convey to his impressible mind the idea of something young and original, and uncontaminate; something that might excite the notion, not of a new found, but new created world, fresh and fair and faultless.—But even the disjunction of continents, which was then believed, produces no such distinction in the human character; the native evil pursues the man

Far as th' equator thrice to the utmost pole.

All experience, all history, especially that history which is supremely the record of truth, rouses us from the bewitching dream, and subverts the fair idea. It was in a garden, a garden too, 'chosen by the Sovereign Planter' that the first sin, the prolific seed of all subsequent offences, was committed. It was in a retirement more profound than any we can conceive, for it was in a world of which we know only of four inhabitants, and those of rural occupations, that the first dreadful breach of relative duties was made; that the first murder, and that of the dearest connexion, was perpetrated. And though the treason of Gethsemane was, in the divine counsels, overruled to repair the defection of Eden, yet to show how little local circumstances influence action, and govern principle, a garden was the scene where that treason was accomplished.

God would not have provided so ill for the welfare of his creatures, who, from the constitution of their nature, could not have subsisted but in communities if seclusion had been necessary to salvation. That it is the most favourable scene for the production of virtue and the promotion of piety we have fully admitted. In the world temptations meet us at every corner. In retirement, it is we who make the advances. He who had tried the extremes of public and private life, who had been a shepherd and a king, and who knew the dangers of both conditions, has given no exclusive instructions to the cottage or the throne. He gives a general exhortation to 'commune with our own hearts, and be still;' an injunction equally applicable to the sceptre and the crook; and, in his own case, he says, 'I have poured out my heart by myself;' but neither is the injunction or the example limited to the world or to retirement, for such pious practices equally belong to both. Yet it must be confessed he dwells on pastoral scenes and rural images with a fondness of which no traces are to be found in his allusion to courts and cities.

But whether we are in public or retired life, our inattention to the reason why we were sent into our present state, is one grand cause of the miseries we endure in it. In the world, as we before observed, we are more governed by our senses; in solitude, by our imagination. Both have a tendency to mislead us. The latter tells us we were not sent into this state to suffer, but to enjoy; and the senses revolt at the sufferings which the imagination had not taught us to expect. To think of exempting ourselves from pain, instead of expecting it and preparing for it, is the common error of those who

overlook or mistake the end of their being. In the hope of this exemption, we fly to one resource after another, thinking, that the ease which has hitherto eluded us, is not attained only because we have not sought it in the right way; that *all* expedients have not yet been tried; that *all* resources are not yet exhausted. Thus we take fresh comfort from the persuasion, that if we have missed of happiness, it is not because happiness is not the proper state of mortal man, nor the prohibited condition of his being, but because we have erred in our pursuit, and shall still find it in the scheme we are next about to adopt.

A bad judgment contributes to our infelicity almost as much as bad dispositions. It is by these false estimates of life, that life is made unhappy. It is from expecting from any state more than it has to bestow, that so little is enjoyed in any. He who is discontented in retirement had perhaps previously amused his vacant hours in collecting all the possibilities of happiness; but had generally caught and fixed her most alluring image in that projected retirement for which his worldly indulgences were every day more disqualifying him.

Far be it from me to aim at inspiring disgust at human life, or any despair of the real happiness which is attainable in it. This attainment is a simple process; to contract our desires, that they may be always fewer than our wants; not to expect from this life more than God meant we should find in it; neither to be governed by sense or fancy, but by the unerring word and will of God; to think constantly that the happiness of a Christian will always be more in hope than in possession; to remember that though deep and bitter sufferings are incident to our frame and state, yet the heaviest and the worst are those which man inflicts on man, or his own passions on himself; that we are only truly and irremediably unhappy when we fasten our desires on objects unsuitable or unattainable—objects neither commensurate to our higher nature, nor adapted to our future hope.

CHAP. XVI.

An inquiry why some good sort of people are not better.

There is a class of pleasing and amiable persons whom it would be difficult not to love, and unjust not to respect; but of whom, though candour obliges us to entertain a favourable hope, yet we are compelled to say, that their general conduct is rather blameless than excellent; their practice rather unoffending than exemplary; that their character rather exhibits a capacity for higher attainments, than any demonstration that such attainments are actually made.

These are the people who, from their sobriety of deportment and orderly habits, we should be naturally led to expect would make a great proficiency in religion. They are seldom hurried into irregularities; discretion is their cardinal virtue; they are frequently quoted as patterns of decorum; the finger of reproach can seldom be pointed at their conduct; that of ridicule, never.—They are not seldom kind and humane, feeling and charitable; they fill many relative duties in a manner which might put to the blush, not a few, from whose higher profession better things might have been expected.

'You have sketched a perfect character,' methinks I hear some angry reader exclaim. What more does society demand? What more would the most correct man require in his son or his wife, his sister or his daughter?

We are indeed most ready to allow, that few, comparatively, go so far; we grant that the world would be a much less disorderly and vexatious scene than it is, if the greater number reached these heights which we yet presume to consider as inadequate to the requisitions of the Gospel, as insufficient to answer the claims of Christianity. Would it not be a very melancholy consideration, if this most encouraging circumstance, of their being *not far* from the kingdom of God, should ever—which Heaven avert!—prove a possible reason for their not entering into it; if their being *almost* Christians, should be the very preventing cause of their becoming *altogether* such?

Their education has been governed rather by proprieties than principles. They have learned to disapprove of hardly any thing in the way of pleasure for its own sake, but highly to reprobate the extremes to which disorderly people carry it. They censure a thing not so much for being wrong in itself, as for being immoderate in the degree.—They condemn all the improper practices against which the world sets its face, but have not very distinct ideas of the right and the wrong in any thing which it tolerates.—Religion, which has made a part of their early instruction, took its turn with the usual accomplishments, though subordinately with respect to the earnestness with which it was inculcated, and with about the same proportion of the time allotted to it, as minutes bears to hours. It was taught as a needful thing, but not as the *one* thing needful. Religion, however, continues to maintain its appropriate place in their reading, and, to a certain degree, to be adopted into their practice, bearing nearly the same proportion to other objects as it did when they were initiated into its elements. They were bred in its forms, and in its forms they persist to live, if the term *live* can be properly applied to any thing which is destitute of the characters and properties of life. They live, it is true, but it is as the vegetable world lives in the winter's frost, which does not indeed kill it, but benumbs its powers, and suspends its vitality.

They make a conscience of reading the Scriptures, but sometimes interpret them too much in their own favour, instead of judging of the duties they inculcate by such properties and results as they promise to produce. In making it their study, they neglect to make it their standard.

They deceive themselves on many points by taking their measures from rules that are not legitimate. One makes his own taste and inclination his measure of practice, another the example of an accredited friend: almost all

plead the dread of singularity, the vanity of opposing your judgment to that of the world, and the absurdity of setting up a standard which you know to be unattainable. If you censure the thoughtlessness of the dissipated, they censure it too; lamenting that there should ever be an abuse of things so innocent and lawful. If you represent the beauty of piety, they approve of every kind of excellence in the abstract, but when you appeal to particular instances, refer them to actual exemplifications, they intimate, that, in respect to whatever exceeds their own measure, it carries in it somewhat of assumption and pretence; or else they insinuate, that however proper the thing may be in the person alluded to, *their* situation admits of an exemption; that what may be justifiable in others differently situated, would be objectionable under *their* circumstances.—Thus we involve ourselves in the flimsy web of a delusive sophistry till the error becomes destructive before it is discerned.

Excess of every kind is what they carefully avoid; and excess in religion as much as in any other thing. Under this head they expunge zeal from their catalogue of virtues. The establishment of a correct character is their first object, and the good opinion of the world the instruments by which they establish it. This keeps their views low; though it costs as much pains and precaution to keep up a high reputation on worldly grounds as it would to cultivate the principle itself, whose results would, in some respects, be nearly the same as what they are labouring to attain. To *be* the thing would be a shorter cut to comfort, than by incessant study and effort to keep up its appearance.

Propriety and order, virtues in themselves, obtain for them the reputation of still higher virtues; all that appears is so amiable, that the world readily gives them credit for qualities which are supposed to lie behind, and are only prevented by diffidence from appearing. They carry on with each other an intercourse of reciprocal, but measured flattery; this serves to promote kindness to each other, and esteem for themselves. Self-complacency is rather kept out of sight by the delicacy of good breeding, than subdued by religious conviction. They are rather governed by certain of the more sober worldly maxims, than by the strictness of Christian discipline. Though they fear sin, and avoid it, yet it is to be suspected they most carefully avoid those faults which are most disreputable, and that its impropriety has its full share in their abhorrence, with its turpitude.

As to religion, they rather respect, than love it. They seem to intimate, that there is something of irreverence in any familiarity with the subject, and place it at an awful distance, as a thing whose mysterious grandeur would be diminished by a too near approach. Another reason why they consider religion rather as an object of veneration than affection, is because they erroneously conceive it to be an enemy to innocent pleasure.

If they are not perfectly good Christians, it is not because they are good Jews, for they do not 'talk of the words' which were commanded under that dispensation, *when they sit in their house, and when they walk by the way, and when they lie down, and when they rise up.* Religion engages their regard somewhat in the way in which the laws of the land engage it, as some thing sacred, from being established by custom and precedent; as a valuable institution for the preservation of the public good; but it does not interest their feelings; they do not consider it so much a thing of individual concern, as of general protection. Of its establishment by authority they think more highly, than of its business with their own hearts, of its influence in maintaining general order, than of its efficacy in promoting in themselves peace and joy. In short, they carve out an image of religion not altogether unorthodox, but which, like the uninformed statue of the enamoured artist, though a beautiful figure, is without life, or power, or motion.

The more obvious duties being discharged, they are a little inclined to think, that too considerable a portion of their time and talents are left at their own disposal. Large intervals of leisure are rather assumed to be a necessary repose and refreshment from right employments and benevolent actions, and as purchased by their performance, than as having any specific application of their own. In short things which they call indifferent, make up too large a portion of their scheme of life, and in their distribution of time.

The class we are considering are apt to be very severe in their censures of those who have lost their reputation, while they are rather too charitable to those who only deserve to lose it. This excessive valuation of externals is not likely to be accompanied with great candour in judging the discredited and the unfortunate. Errors which we ourselves have had no temptation to commit, we are too much disposed to think out of the reach of pardon: and, while we justly commend innocence, we give too little credit to repentance.

The misfortune is, they do not so much as suspect that there is any higher state of being, any degree of spiritual life, beyond what they have attained. They consider religion rather as a scheme of rules, than a motive principle, as a stationary point, than a perpetual progress. They consider its observances rather as an end, than a means. It is not so much natural presumption which roots them where they are, for, in ordinary cases, they are perhaps diffident and modest; it is not always conceit which prevents their minds from shooting upwards: it is the low notion they entertain of the genius of Christianity; it is the inadequateness of their views with its requirements; it is their unacquaintedness with the spirit of that religion which they profess honestly, but understand indistinctly. This ignorance makes them rest satisfied with a state which did not satisfy the great apostle. While *they* think they have made a progress sufficient to justify them in believing they have 'already attained,' *his* vast attainments served only to prevent his looking back on them, served only to stimulate him to press forward towards the mark. Some good sort of people, on the contrary, act as if they were afraid of being different from what they are, or of being surprised into becoming better than they intended.

Among the many causes which concur to keep them at a sort of determined distance from serious piety, a not uncommon one is, their happening to hear of the injudicious exhibition of religion in one or more of its high but eccentric professors: these they affect to believe, are fair specimens of the so much vaunted religious world. Instead of inquiring what is the true scriptural view of Christianity, that they may make nearer approaches to it, they are far more anxiously concerned to recede, as far as possible, from persons who falsely profess to be its best representatives. They conclude, and, in some instances, but too justly, that the profession of these people has not transformed their hearts, but their connections: that they have adopted a party rather than a principle, embraced a cloud for a goddess, and an opinion instead of a rule of conduct; and they observe that they are unjust in their enmities to other classes, in proportion to the violence of their attachment to their own. It is no wonder if, with their partial view of the subject, they should be deterred, when they see these persons act as much below their system, as they themselves not seldom live above their own.

But they do not act thus on other occasions. If they meet with an incompetent but blustering lawyer, or an unskilful but presumptuous physician, instead of calumniating the two learned faculties, instead of resolving to have no more to do with either, they avoid the offending individuals, and look out for sounder practitioners. Hence, indeed, it is to be remarked by the way, there arises a new and powerful motive, why all who make a high profession of religion should not only be eminently careful to exhibit an even and consistent practice, but should studiously avoid in their conversation all offensive phrases, and repulsive expressions; why they should not be perpetually intimating, as if *preaching the Gospel* was a party-business, and a business entirely confined to their own party.

Worldly observers, of the better sort, cannot sometimes but perceive in the same class of religionists, less forbearance in their temper, less patience, less moderation and kindness, than they themselves evince; they also remark in some of them, though it is doubtless done with a view not to subtract from their charities, less generosity and largeness of heart than they see in many of their own class; a petty strictness in their dealings, not quite of a piece with the liberality, I had almost said, with the honesty, of Christianity. Unhappily, they are kept on their guard in the unnecessary dread of being righteous overmuch, by the very peculiarities which, in these persons, indicate a defect rather than a redundancy. These indications, however, which they conceive to be the distinctive marks of the whole tribe, make them stand aloof from Christians of the sounder class, in whom they might have seen, on a nearer approach, a fair and lovely exhibition of the principle by which they are governed.

Another preventing cause of improvement is, their associating familiarly with persons of less worth than themselves. This is injurious in two ways;—These sober followers of pleasure sanction its thoughtless devotee by the influence of their respectable character, and give weight to those who would otherwise have none, while, at the same time, they cannot but feel their own decided superiority to those with whom their complaisance unites them; and when they compare themselves with characters so defective, they are in danger of resting still more satisfied with their own moderate, though higher, standard. But, to be conscious of being better than those who are bad, is no very solid ground either of comfort or credit.

There is another co-operating cause which keeps down the growth of piety. They are conversant with various classes of writers on different subjects, who do not indeed go farther in their disregard of religion than to let it alone; if they avowedly attacked it, the persons in question would take the alarm, and avoid the perusal of works obviously pregnant with evil. These writers do not always oppose it, but they have nothing to do with it; they virtually say, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Christianity. We are far from meaning that religion ought to be, or that it can, with propriety, be obtruded into subjects of a totally distinct nature. Yet, if its subtle and pervading principle were mixed up with the other ingredients in the mind of the author, the penetrating spirit would occasionally break through, not in matter, but in essence. Where this feeling exists in the heart, a ray of light will sometimes fall unconsciously on subjects which have no immediate connexion with it. In a cloudy day, though you do not see the body of the sun, you know, from the light it emits, that it is in its proper station.

But the writers to whom we allude, take other ground; they set out with other views; their ethics have another cast. There is a pretty strong implication, especially in compositions of some of our modish itinerants, how good men may be independent of religion. In writers of a sounder cast, though also with these amusement be the professed object, with whatever flowers they strew the path, they entice you into no morasses; you always feel there is a bottom. You go on as much entertained as if you were misled. The pleasure of an uncorrupted mind is not diminished by feeling himself safe, nor is it interrupted while he is gratifying his fancy, by being obliged to watch that no trap is laid for his principles.

To explain, by one or two instances:—Clarendon's and Burnet's histories of their own times no more profess to be religious works, than the histories of Hume or Smollet. They were written by men of different political parties, of different professional engagements. Yet, though treating on subjects which naturally excluded any formal descants on religion, there is a predominating tendency which discloses the principles of both; which affords a pledge of their general principles; which makes the reader feel himself safe, because it assures him he is in the hands of a christian historian.

Again;—In travelling to the Hebrides with Johnson, it is no small thing to find, that we can be delighted without being in danger. The tourist, without stepping out of his way to hunt for moral remark, or religious suggestion, never

forgets that he is a Christian moralist; though in quest of mere amusement, we find our minds enriched with some just sentiment, fortified with some sound principle.

But, in the modish school, the traveller presents his benevolent man, the novelist his perfect character, the moralist his philosopher, the poet his hero, with principles, if not always elaborately in opposition to, yet thoroughly unconnected with, the Christian scheme. It is rather a silent counter-working of its necessity than an overt attack on its truth, for this strong measure is now less resorted to, as more repulsive and less successful. Neglect answers the end better than opposition. The longer any thing is kept out of sight, the less irksome its absence becomes, till from feeling it not necessary, we proceed to think it not real. The traces of right principle grow faint in the mind, when perpetually hid by interposing objects. The misfortune is, these works make up the larger part of the study of many readers, who do not so much desire to get rid of a stricter scheme, as to lose the perception that they have it not, and the remembrance that, perhaps, they once had it.

CHAP. XVII.

The inquiry, why some good sort of people are not better, continued.

THERE is one prominent cause which assists in preventing the persons considered in the preceding chapter from making any material proficiency; and it is the very cause, which, if it had been rightly directed, would probably, in such minds have led to a contrary end—their choice of *religious* reading; it is, confining their pious studies exclusively and systematically to that low standard of divinity, which has cramped the growth of many well-disposed persons. The beginning of the last century first presented us with this lax theology; which, though it has still its advocates and followers, they are, we trust, daily declining in numbers and in credit. The excess to which this deteriorated Christianity has been carried in a recent academical exhibition of '*Christian Liberty*,' and especially in a late series of theological '*Hints*,' by a professor of the law, has, it is to be hoped, produced a good effect. When an evil has touched its ultimate point, may we not presume, that the practice may make a gradual retrocession to sound principle? In these, and similar writers, no one but sees that the road to heaven is made far more smooth and easy than the Scriptures have made it; so smooth as to invite many and advance none; so easy that not only, as in the old code, those who run may read, but those who sleep may conquer.

But what still renders this meagre divinity unfortunately too acceptable, is, that it teaches a complacency in our own goodness, that goodness, the acquisition of which is rendered easy, because it falls in so readily with our natural corruptions. The truth is, we require less to be excited to the practice of some insulated virtues, which these authors do not neglect to recommend, than to the abasing of that pride which they rather foster than correct. When we hear so much of the dignity of human nature, we secretly exult in our participation of that dignity; we take to ourselves a full share of that stock of excellence lavishly attributed to our species, and are ready to exclaim, *and I, too, am a man!* These writers make their way to the affections by a plausibility of manner which veils the shallowness of their reasoning. But the great engine of success, as we have already observed, is the prudent accommodation of the reasoning to the natural propensities of the heart, and the flattering the very evils, the existence of which they yet deny. The reader welcomes the doctrines which put him in good humour with himself; he cordially credits the prophesier of smooth things, and is pleased in proportion as he is not alarmed. That which does not go to the root of the evil—evil which cannot be cured without being disturbed—that which does not irritate the patient, by laying open the peccant part, will be naturally acceptable.

These writers are too much disposed to address their readers as if they were already religious; as requiring, indeed, to be reminded, but not as requiring to be alarmed; as expecting commendation for what they are, rather than admonition as to what they ought to be. They take for granted, what in some cases requires proof, that all are Christians, not in profession, but in reality; and the same uniform class of instructions, or rather of gratuitous positions, is directed to the whole mass, without any individual searchings of the heart, without any distinct address, any discriminating application to that variety of classes of which society is compounded. To the profligate, liver or the more decent sensualist; to the sceptical moralist, or the careless believer; to all, perhaps, if we might except that most hatred heretic, the fanatical over-believer, is the one soothing panegyric, or the one frigid admonition, addressed. We do not pretend to say that virtue is not recommended, but as Seneca and Antoninus had recommended it before, so they had done it better, less vaguely, and more pointedly. Many of the virtues, by the practice of which the readers are taught that salvation is to be obtained, they cannot but feel to be their own virtues; this, while it sets their apprehensions at rest, naturally fills them with complacency in their actual character, instead of kindling an ardent desire after higher attainments.—Vices, from which they must be conscious they are exempt, and which they have as little excitement as occasion to practice, are properly censured: but the evil dispositions of the heart, which if insisted on and pointedly laid open, would set them upon examining their own, are passed over, or lightly treated, or softened down into natural weakness, pardonable imperfection, or accidental infirmity. The heart is not considered as the perennial fountain of all actual offence and error.

A theology which depresses the standard, which overlooks the motives, which dilutes the

doctrines, softens the precepts, lowers the sanctions, and mutilates the scheme of Christianity; which merges it in undefined generalities, which makes it consist in a system of morals which might be interwoven into almost any religion—for there are few systems of religion which profess to teach immorality; a theology which neither makes Jesus Christ the foundation, nor the Holy Spirit the efficient agent, nor inward renovation a leading principle, nor humility a distinguishing characteristic; which insists on a good heart, but demands not a renewed heart; which inserts virtues into the stock of the old nature, but insists on the necessity of a changed nature;—such a theology is not that which the costly apparatus of Christianity was designed to present to us. If it teaches that we have virtues to attain and imperfections to be cured, it insinuates that the one may be attained by our own strength, and the other cured without divine assistance. Our faults, if we have any, are to be surmounted by our reason, and our virtues to be improved from a regard to our comfort and the advancement of our credit; for the satisfaction they afford, and the reputation they procure us. The good man of these writers, like the good man of the ancient Stoics, is so full of virtue as to leave no room for repentance, so faultless that humility would be affectation. Like them they seem almost to diminish the distance between their Maker and themselves, by exalting the man and lowering the Deity.

The persons in question frequently read the Scriptures, and we are ready to wonder that in reading them they do not perceive their disagreement with the authors to whom we allude. There, all the doctrines overlooked by them, are pressed in every page; but whether they read without remarking the difference, or whether, though in the use (as we hope) of daily prayer, they neglect to implore that divine Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, to direct the truths they contained to their hearts; they do not seem to enter into the grand peculiarities of the Gospel; nor into the personal interests they have in the doctrines it inculcates, and the precepts it enforces. How many read the account of the fall of Adam, as an historical fact, of which they never entertained a doubt, yet without feeling any more individual concern in it, than in the fall of Babylon; without being sensible of any corresponding contamination in their own hearts. When told of the self-denying doctrines which Christianity includes, they triumphantly produce passages, not only from Solomon and St. Paul, but from the Saviour himself, which completely contradict such gloomy assertions, *that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;* that *Christ's commands are not grievous;* that *his yoke is easy*, with a multitude of the same animating strain. But they produce them, not so much because they are indeed most delightful truths, as because they are supposed to annul such less engaging texts as are descriptive of *the strait gate*, and *the narrow way*, and *the few who enter them;* of the difficulty with which the rich, that is, those who trust in riches, shall attain to heaven; that *taking up the cross* is an indispensable qualification for the followers of him who suffered on it, with an endless multitude of similar passages.

Now the truth is, there is not the slightest disagreement between these two classes of texts. The unqualified peace, joy, and comfort, expressed in the former, represent what religion is in herself, describe her native excellence, her genuine beauty, her original perfection. Whereas the difficulties attached to the second class arise necessarily from the depravity of the will, that alienation from God and goodness, which renders that irksome which is in itself delightful. To him who knows, because he feels, that natural reluctance of the heart to the requisitions of a religion calculated to produce these happy effects, there is a perfect congruity between the passions thus set in opposition. Though both are true, each is consistent with the other; but their truth and consistency strike not those who reject or adopt what best suits their creed or their convenience.

They know, indeed, that they must give a nominal assent to the doctrine of divine assistance, because it is said to be a doctrine of that Scripture which they believe; but they assent to it with implicitness, rather than conviction, and if they do allow the intervention of the Holy Spirit, they attach an undue value to human agency. If they say, they are far from excluding heavenly aid, their assent somewhat resembles that of the Welch captain, who, when Henry the Fifth, after the battle of Agincourt, ascribed exclusively the victory to God, coolly replied, 'Indeed he did us great good.'

But many of the writers to whom we have adverted, and by whom the persons in question are influenced, seem to make their reverence for the Scriptures a ground for disallowing the agency of the Spirit; as if there were not the most perfect agreement between an appeal to the one and a belief in the other. The Spirit of God leads us to no new instructor, but only points us to his word, teaching us to discern it more clearly and to receive it more affectionately. That would be, indeed, an illusion, not an illumination, which would direct us to derive our instruction from any other fountain than the oracles of truth.

These persons are striking instances how dexterously we contrive to turn the scale in our own favour, by balancing some lesser fault to which we are not inclined, against some strongly besetting wrong propensity. We seldom soften down any precept that is not pointed at our particular temptation. All the other laws we allow to be not only good and holy, but just, for they only affect other people. The young man in the Gospel had no objection to those commandments which were suggested to him as the rule of duty; for he was chaste and honest, neither a disobedient son nor a murderer, neither addicted to idolatry nor profaneness; but the command to dispossess himself of his fortune for charitable purposes cut deep, for he was not only rich but avaricious. It is thus we prevaricate with duty. We would warp the precept to our passions, instead of bending our inclinations to the duty. We lament the harshness of the command, when we should be lamenting the perversity of the will.

A low standard of religion flatters our vanity, is easily acted up to, does not wound our self-love, is practicable without sacrifices, and respectable without self-denial. It allows the implantation of virtues without irradicating vices; recommends right actions without expelling wrong principles, and grafts fair appearances upon unresisted corruptions.

This low tone of religion is rendered still more acceptable, from being sprinkled with frequent vituperations of that species of Christianity now derided by a term which was once considered as its specific character. This term, what with the too monopolizing adoption of it by one description of persons, and the contemptuous implication conveyed in the use of it by another, we almost fear to use lest we should be conjuring up the spirit of fanaticism in the minds of the latter class, or vindicating its exclusive adoption in the language of the former. The assumption of names on the one hand, and, if I may venture so vulgar a phrase, calling names on the other, have been of infinite disservice to religion. Such is the new meaning now assigned to old terms, that we doubt if the application of the epithet in question would not excite a sneer, if not a suspicion, against the character of Isaiah himself, were we to name him by his ancient denomination *the Evangelical prophet*. This laconic term includes a diatribe in a word. It is established into a sweeping term of derision of all serious Christians, and its compass is stretched to such an extent, as to involve within it every shade and shape of real or fictitious piety, from the elevated but sound and sober Christian, to the wildest and most absurd fanatic; its large inclosure takes in all, from the most honourable heights of erudition to the most contemptible depths of ignorance. Every man who is serious, and every man who is silly, every man who is holy, and every man who is mad, is included in this comprehensive epithet. We see perpetually that solidity, sublimity, and depth, are not found a protection against the magic mischief of this portentous appellation.

It gratifies us to be assured that our own tone is sufficiently high, and that, whatever is higher, is erroneous, or superfluous, or hypocritical or ridiculous. This it is which attaches many a reader to the opposite style of writing, and in proportion as it attaches him, by reconciling him more to himself, animates him more fiercely against those who make higher requisitions of faith and holiness, those who strip off the mask from actions unfounded in principle, who exact self-abasement, who insist on the necessity of good works, not as a meritorious ground of salvation, but as an evidence of obedience to God, and of conformity to Christ.

Most sincerely do we believe, that there is nothing which the better sort of this class dread more than hypocrisy. But do they not sometimes dread the imputation almost as much as the thing? And is it not to be feared that, with the dread of this odious vice being imputed to them, is a little connected the suspicion of its existence in all who go farther than themselves? Are they not too ready to accuse of want of sincerity or of soberness, every one who rises above their own level? Is not every degree of warmth in their pious affections, every expression of zeal in their conversation, every indication of strictness in their practice, construed into an implication, that so much as this zeal and strictness exceed their own, there is in them just so much error as that excess involves?

By the class of writers to which they are attached, the pious affections are branded as the stigma of enthusiasm. But a religion which is all brain, and no heart, is not the religion of the Gospel. The spirit there exhibited is as far removed from philosophical apathy, as from the intemperate language of passion. There are minds so constituted, and hearts so touched, that they cannot meditate on the incarnation of the Son of God, his voluntary descent from the glory which he had with his Father from all eternity, his dying for us men and for our salvation—with the same unmoved temper with which they acknowledge the truth of any other fact. A grateful feeling, excited by these causes, is as different from a fanatical fervor as it is from a languid acknowledgment. It is not energy, however, which is reprobated, so much as the cause of its excitement. Should the zealous Christian change the object of his admiration, should he express the same animated feeling for Socrates, which the other had expressed for his Saviour, his enthusiasm would be ascribed to his good taste, and the object would be allowed to justify the rapture.

But, is not objecting to earnestness in religion to strike out the catalogue of virtues that quality which so eminently distinguished the scripture worthies? Is it not denying that 'spirit of power and of love' which it is worth observing, the Apostle makes the associate of 'a sound mind,' to deny that Christianity ought to make an impression on the heart, and if on the heart on the feelings? These fastidious critics place, what they call the abstract truths of religion, on the same footing with abstract truths in science; they allow only the same intellectual conviction of truth, the same cool assent, in the one case, which is given to a demonstration in the other. But would not he be thought a defective orator at the bar, or in the senate, who should plead as if he did not know that men had feelings to be touched as well as understandings to be convinced; who considered the affections as the only portion of character to which he must be careful not to advert, in addressing beings who are feeling as well as intelligent? Shall a fervent rhetoric be admired in one orator, when pleading for the freedom of men, and reprobated in another, when pleading for their salvation? Shall we be enraptured with the eloquent advocate for the Agrarian law, and disgusted with the strenuous advocate for the everlasting Gospel? Shall not one man be allowed the same earnestness in combating unbelief, which has immortalized another in execrating Verres?

It must, assuredly, be maintained, that there is such a sober mode of exhibiting truth, as may show that the sacred messenger has no delight in declaring that part of his message which yet it is his duty to deliver; which, while it cannot fail to call forth every feeling of interest for the souls of men, at the same time demands the utmost tenderness, as treating of their dangers.

Tenderness, it is true, must not alter truth, nor conceal menaces, which make an awful part of it. Yet a difference may be sometimes inferred by the manner of delivering them.—Who has not heard a holy man, who, feeling himself bound to declare the whole counsel of God, has denounced his solemn judgments with a subdued voice, and an almost hesitating accent; speaking as one who felt that he was acquitting himself of a painful but bounden duty;—while another of a coarser make, and a less mortified spirit, proclaims the commanded threat in all the thunders of Sinai; seeming, by his tone and gesture, to rejoice that it has fallen to his lot to alarm, and not to console? The one 'persuades men' because he knows 'the terrors of the Lord;' the other seems to have his own gratification in terrifying. The one evidently rejoices in being the ambassador of reconciliation, the other appears, but is not, we are assured, really, glad to bear the mandate of condemnation.

But, to return to writers in the extreme of the other class. Vague essays on general and undefined morality, which we here venture to represent as their fault, are very different from distinct discourses or treatises on the several virtues; these latter flow from the study, and teach the improvement of the human heart. But to produce their effect, they must produce their commission. The proclamation must always have the broad seal of Christianity appended to it. It is indeed not only unnecessary, but impossible and imprudent, that in every discourse the whole scheme of Christian doctrine should be laid open. An attempt to do this has frequently produced confusion, by crowding in more materials than the space will contain; and thus leaving the stamp of no one truth distinct upon the mind. We mean no more, than that the general impression made, should be, that the moral quality under discussion should appear to be explicitly derived from the school of Christ, and the reader not be left to exercise his ingenuity in conjecturing, till the closing sentence informs him, to what system of religion it belongs.

It is also perfectly proper to cut the circle of the virtues into segments, provided it be shown how they are connected with each other, and how the whole fall within the circumference of that divine religion which is their proper centre. It were also to be wished, that there were no undue and hyperbolical exaltation of the virtue under consideration, which often makes a part stand for the whole. This exclusive praise of the quality inculcated, is, to Christianity, what it would be to general geography, if, in order to give an idea of our world, a map of a single country should be exhibited without coast or boundary. It differs from the Christian exhibition of moral virtues, as this insulated map would differ from a chart of the same country when delineated on the globe; there you see not only the country itself correctly displayed, but you perceive by what sea it is bordered, on what land it touches, into what other country some points of this cut deep, and how narrow are the bounds which separate it from some hostile neighbour; you see, also, its dependance on every thing about it, and its relative situation on the earth.

If we might be allowed another illustration, we would observe, that, to expect to give a just idea of Christianity by any quality, as detached from the whole, would be to resemble a certain Athenian, who having a palace to sell, took out a single brick from the wall, and produced it at the auction as a specimen of the edifice.

Nor, as we humbly conceive, is it a superfluous care, so to contrive, as that, when it is right to expose any vice to reprobation, the reader who is exempt from it may not too much plume himself upon the exemption.—A venerable clergyman once assured the author, that he had never done so much mischief as by the best sermon he had ever preached. It was against the sin of drunkenness. It happened to be an offence to which none of his auditors happened to be addicted.—After it was over, some of them expressed no small triumph at their own secure state, from a consciousness of being free from the vice which had been so well exposed, and, as if the exercise of no virtue but the one opposite to the sin in question had been necessary, they went home exulting in their own superior goodness.

The writers to whom we have been referring, triumphantly distinguish themselves by the appellation of *practical*, in studied opposition to those who are professedly doctrinal. Let it however, be observed, that, maintaining a due respect for the conscientious of both classes, we only presume to allude, in our animadversions, to those of either side, who carry their specific characteristics into an extreme in which each excludes its opposite. But far more deficient are the practical discussions of the one, if they want the solid weight and metal of the Gospel to make them sterling, than the doctrinal dissertations of the other; which, however, ought never to want the intelligible superscription of practical remark to render them current.—Yet is there not sometimes a misnomer in the former appellation? Can that writing be called truly practical which does not attempt greatly to raise the tone of conduct, which does not press practice home on the conscience as flowing from the highest principle, and directed to the noblest end; which is not urged on that ground of argument that is the most cogent, not inferred from that motive which is the most irresistible, nor impressed by that authority best calculated to secure obedience? The nature of the action commonly participates in the nature of the motive. Practice is not likely to rise higher than the spring which set it a-going.

At the same time, it is but fair to confess, that much of that species of composition which assumes a more spiritual character, is sometimes lamentably deficient in this good requisite. It begins not seldom, by laying a good and solid foundation; but when we lift our eyes to look upon the structure which we expected to see raised upon it, we find it negligently run up, if not totally omitted. Practice seems to be considered as a thing of course, not necessary to be insisted on, much less to have its path clearly chalked out. The use to be made of the doctrine which has been delivered, is turned over to the piety or ingenuity of the reader, without any specific direction, or personal application.

Too much is left for him to supply, which, perhaps, implicitly leaning on his guide, he will not supply, or which, from want of knowledge, he cannot.

Far be it from our intention, however, in thus venturing with real diffidence to compare the faulty extremes in both cases, to assimilate at all their nature or their tendency:—the extreme of adherence to doctrine frequently springing from the deepest sense of the infinite importance of that doctrine, and accompanied with a pious willingness to spend and be spent, in its propagation. The extreme of adherence to what is called mere morality, is too often the lamentable effect of ignorance of doctrine, and of an interest neither felt, nor possessed, nor desired in doctrinal blessings.

With this guard distinctly kept in view, we venture, with all humility, to repeat, that there is an extreme on both sides: the one may be abstractedly considered as all propositions, the other as all conclusions. The one fails of effect by not depending on just premises; in the other, well established premises produce inferior good, because the conclusions are not sufficiently brought to bear on the actual demands of life. The one, while he powerfully shows the reader that he is a sinner, limits both his proof and his instruction to one or two prominent doctrines; he names, indeed, with unwearied iteration, that only name by which we can be saved, faithfully dwells on the efficacy of the divine remedy, but without clearly pointing out its application to practical purposes. The other presumes his readers to be so wise, as to be able to supply their own deficiencies, or so good, as to stand in little need of supernatural assistance. Is it not mocking human helplessness, to tell men they must be holy, good, and just, without directing them to the principle from whence 'all holy thoughts, all good counsels, and all just works, do proceed'—to direct the stream of action, and keep out of sight the spring from which it must flow—to expect they will renounce sin if they do not renounce self—to send them vagrant in search of some stray virtue, without showing them where to apply for direction to find it?

The combination of the opposite but indispensable requisites is most happily exemplified in all our best divines, living and dead; and, blessed be God, very numerous in the catalogue in both instances. They have, with a large and liberal construction, followed that most perfect exemplification of this union, which is so generally exhibited in Scripture, more particularly in that express model, the third chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians. There, every thing that is excellent in practice is made to proceed from Him 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' There, every act has its inspiring motive, every virtue its radical principal; falsehood is not only prohibited to the converts, but the prohibition is accounted for, '*because* ye have put on the new man.' The obedience of wives, the affection of husbands, the submission of children, all is to be done 'in the name of the Lord Jesus.'—Servants are enjoined to fidelity as 'fearing God.' 'Mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,' are recommended, *because* the converts 'are the elect of God.' Every inhibition of every wrong practice has its reference to Christ, every act of goodness its legitimate principle. Contentions are forbidden, forgiveness is enjoined, on the same high ground—the example of 'Him in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'—This is *practical preaching*—This is *evangelical preaching*.

CHAP. XVIII.

Thoughts respectfully suggested to good sort of people.

In perusing the foregoing chapter, it may be, as it has been, with unwearied repetition, objected, that it is equally preposterous and unjust, to hold out a standard of religion and morals so high, as to defeat, in the reader, all hope of attaining it. It may be urged, that it would be more prudent, as well as more useful, to propose a more moderate standard, and to suggest a more temperate measure, which would not, as in the present case, by discouraging, render attainment hopeless. For an answer, we must send them to the Redeemer's own mouth, to the excision of the right hand, the plucking out the right eye. This it will be justly insisted, is not a command, but a metaphor. Granted.—We know we are not commanded to lop off our limbs, but our corruptions. But, would He who is not only true, but THE TRUTH, adopt a stong metaphor to express a feeble obligation? Is any tone, then, may we not ask, too high, if not higher than that uniformly employed in the Bible? What do we mean, when we say, that we receive the Gospel as a rule of faith and practice, if, having made the declaration, we instantly go, and, without scruple, lower the rule, and depress the practice?

High and low are indefinite terms: their just use depends on the greatness or littleness of the objects to which they refer. When we consider, that the object in question is eternal life, should the standard which God has made the measure of our attaining to it, be so depressed as to prevent that attainment? Do not the Apostles and their Master, the Saints and the King of Saints, every where suggest a rule, not only of excellence, but perfection; a rule to the adoption of which no hopelessness of attainment is to prevent our stretching forward?

Scripture does, indeed, every where represent us as incompetent without divine assistance. But does it not every where point out where our strength lies; where it is to be sought; how it is to be obtained? It not only shows where our wants may be supplied, but our failures pardoned. Does any one doctrine, any one precept, of the Gospel, deal in emollients, prescribe palliatives, suggest petty reliefs, point out inferior remedies, speak of any medicine, but such as is proportioned to the depth of the disease?

Yet it is not uncommon for those whose views have been low, and whose practice, con

sequently, has not been high, to combine with this mediocrity of character the most exalted expectation of future recompence: to couple a comparatively low faith and conduct with those lofty promises which the New Testament holds out to the most exalted Christian. Many in the day of health and activity would have considered taking up the cross,' 'living to him who died for them,' &c. &c. as figurative expressions, lively images, not exacting much practical obedience; nay, would have considered the proposal of bringing them into action as downright enthusiasm; yet who has not heard these persons, in a dangerous sickness, repeat with entire self-application the glorious and hard-earned exultation of him, who, after unrivalled sufferings and unparalleled services, after having been 'in deaths oft,' after having been even favoured with a glimpse of heaven, exclaims, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,' and then go on with the most delusive complacency, to apply to themselves the sublime apostrophe with which this fine exclamation is wound up—'henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory,' &c. &c.: and it has passed into an accredited phrase, when one of this sort of Christians speaks of the death of another in the same class, to observe, with an air of triumph, that *he is gone to his reward*. We must confess, that when we hear this assurance so applied, we charitably incline to hope it is not so bad with them as the expression implies; because, if heaven is thus assigned as a payment of work done, one cannot help trembling at a reward apportioned to such worth. For these contractors for heaven, who bring their merit as their purchase-money, and intend to be saved at their own expense, do not always take care to be provided with a very exorbitant sum, though they expect so large a return in exchange for it; while those who, placing no dependence on their works, never dare to draw upon heaven for the payment, will often be found to have a much larger stock upon hand, ready to produce as an evidence, though they renounce them as a claim. In both cases, is it not better to transfer them and ourselves from merit to mercy, as a more humble and less hazardous ground of dependance?

Far be from me the uncharitable presumption, that these sanguine persons are destitute of principle, or void of right intentions. Doubtless, in many instances, they persevere in error for no reason, but because they believe it to be truth. There is even much that is right in them; but are they not too easily satisfied with a low measure of that right, without examining accurately the quality of the practice, merely because it is not disreputable?

Our knowledge of religion and sound morals must inevitably arise, in a good measure, from the knowledge of ourselves. Now, the kind of reading of which we have complained, is so far from improving that knowledge, that it keeps it out of our sight, by representing us to ourselves as other creatures than we really are. The most ingenious abstract reasoning on man will not show him what sort of being he is, if he be not taught to know it within himself. He must seek it in the depths of his own mind, and compare what he finds there with the unerring law of God. The facts he might deduce, and the experiments he might make from the study of both in conjunction, would teach him either to confirm or correct his theory; his experience, if it did not establish, would overturn his speculations, and he would begin to build on new ground.

May we not be allowed with all tenderness and respect, not with the arrogance of any superiority, but such as is the inevitable fruit of long observation, to suggest a few of the many remedies against the evils we have been regretting? The true preliminary to vital religion is to feel and acknowledge our lapsed humanity. There is no entrance into the temple of Christianity but through this lowly vestibule. All the dissertations of the most profound philosophers on the reasonableness and beauty of our religion, on its excellence and superiority, are but a fruitless exercise of ingenuity and eloquence, if they exclude this fundamental truth. The ablest writer, if he does not feel this conviction in his own heart, will never carry it to yours. But if you have once got over this hard and humbling introduction, the same divine guide who has given this initiatory opening, will, to the patient and persevering inquirer, perfect the work he has so happily begun.—While he who turns over the page of his own virtues, and ransacks the catalogue of his good actions, will find that, under the pretence of seeking consolation, he is evading instruction; he is only heaping up materials for building confidence in himself—'by that sin fell the angels'—and may be in little less danger than the flagitious offender. Our Lord has decided on this momentous question, by his preference of the self-abasing penitent who had nothing to ask but mercy, to him who had nothing to request but praise; of the lowly confessor of his offences to the pompous recounter of his virtues; whose prayer, if self-panegyric deserves that name, plainly declares that he already possessed so much, that there was nothing left for him to ask. Our Saviour took this occasion to let us see, that he is better pleased when we show him our wants, than our merits.

As you do not live in the practice or the allowance of vices, which make it your interest to wish that Christianity may be false, and as you believe its external evidences, endeavour to gain also an internal conviction that it is true. Examine also into the principle of your best actions. Even some who have made a more considerable proficiency, are too apt to defer examining into the motive, till they have concluded the act which the motive should have determined; they then, as it were, make up the motive to the act, and bring about the accordance in a way to quiet their own minds. Perhaps interest is acting on an opinion which we fancied that wisdom had suggested. If it succeed, we compliment ourselves on the event; if it fail, we applaud ourselves on the assigned, because we are not quite sure of the real motive.

The way to make a progress in piety and peace, is not to be too tender of our present feelings; is nobly to make some sacrifice of immediate ease, for the sake of acquiring future happiness. Desire not opiates, seek not anodynes,

when your internal constitution requires stimulants. Cease to conceive of religion as a stationary thing; be assured, that to be available, it must be progressive. Read the Scriptures, not as a form, but as God's great appointed means, of infusing into your heart that life-giving principle which is the spring of all right practice. Cultivate every virtue, but rest not in any. Do every thing to deserve the esteem of men, but make not that esteem your governing principle. Value not most those qualities which are the most popular. Correct your worldly wisdom with 'the wisdom which is from above.' Bear in your recollection, that to minds of a soft and yielding cast, the world is a more formidable enemy than those two other rival tempters which the New Testament commonly associates with it, and which would not, generally, have made a third in such corrupt company, if its dangers had not borne some proportion to theirs. It is the more necessary to press this point, as the mischiefs of the world are felt without being suspected. The other two spiritual enemies seize on the more corrupt; but the better disposed are the unconscious victims of the world, which frequently betrays its votary into the hands of its two confederates. People are inclined to be pleased with themselves when the world flatters them; they make the world their supreme arbiter; they are unwilling to appeal from so lenient a judge; and being satisfied with themselves, when its verdict is in their favour, the applause of others too often, by confirming their own, supercedes an inquiry into their real state.

The unconfirmed Christian should attend to his conduct just in those points which, though dishonest, are not dishonourable; points in which, though religion will be against him, the approbation of the world will bear him out. He would not do a disreputable thing, but should a temptation arise where his reputation is safe, there his trial commences, there he must guard himself with augmented vigilance.

The more enlightened the conscience becomes, the more we shall discover the unspeakable holiness of God. But our perceptions being cleared, and our spiritual discernment rendered more acute, this must not lead us to fancy that we are worse than when we thought so well of ourselves. We are not worse, because the growing light of divine truth reveals faults unobserved before to our view, or enlarges those we thought insignificant. Light does not create impurities, it only discloses them. Moreover, this efficient spirit does not illuminate without correcting; it is not only given for reproof, but amendment; not only for amendment, but consolation. Our unhappiness does not consist in that contrition which grows out of our new acquaintance with our own hearts. 'The true misery consisted in the blindness, presumption, and self-sufficiency, which our ignorance of ourselves generated. Our true felicity begins in our being brought, however severe be the means, to renounce our self-confidence, and cast ourselves entirely upon God.

It will be a good test of the improving state of a person of the above description, when he can patiently, though not at first pleasantly, persevere in the perusal of works which do not flatter his security; nay, to persevere the more earnestly, because the perusal discovers his own character to himself. When once he is brought to endure these salutary probings, he will soon be brought to court the hand that probes. He will begin to disrelish the vapid civility with which the superficial examiner treats human nature. Nay, he may now safely meditate on the *dignity* of man, which, in his former state, so far misled him. He will find that, in another sense, the doctrine is true. Man was indeed originally a dignified creature, for he was made in the image of the perfect God. Even now, though his will is depraved, yet he has noble intellectual faculties which give some notion of what he was. His heart is alienated, but his understanding approves the rectitude which his will rejects. He has still recoverable powers; he is still capable, when divine truth shall have made its full impression on his soul, of that renovation which shall restore him to the dignity he has lost, reinstate him in the favour he has forfeited, and raise him infinitely higher than the elevation from which he has fallen.

To those who attempt to relieve his temporary distress, by directing his eyes to his own virtues, and to the approbation those virtues are certain to obtain from heaven, he will reply with the illustrious sufferer of old, 'Miserable comforters are ye all!' Slight remedies will no longer satisfy him. The more deep his views become, the less he will be disposed to claim his share in the compliments lavished on the natural human character.

But, oh! what unspeakable consolation will the humble believer derive from the appellation by which the divine Spirit is designated—The Comforter. There is something sublimely merciful in a dispensation of which the term is so delightfully expressive of the thing.—We read in the Scriptures of *grieving* the Holy Spirit; but when we consider him under this most soothing character, is there not something of peculiar and heinous ingratitude in *grieving the Comforter*.

To endeavour to obtain a more lively belief in the existence, and earnestly to implore the aid of this quickening Spirit, would be a great means of improving the character. That the doctrine of spiritual influence is a practical doctrine, is clearly deducible from the command, arising out of the conviction, that the truth was already received—'If ye *live* in the Spirit, *walk* in the Spirit.' Observe that we press you only on your own principles: we recommend you only to act upon the creed you avow. If we suggest to your adoption any thing further than the Bible enjoins, we are guilty of fanaticism, and you should be on your guard against it. We venture not to say what name is due to those who would depress your views greatly below either.

In perusing the Scriptures, might you not commune with your own heart in something like the following language: 'The book is not a work of fancy. I do not, therefore, read it for amusement, but instruction; but am I seriously proposing to read it like one who has a deep interest in its contents? Is it my sincere inten-

tion to convert the knowledge I am about to acquire into any practical application to my own case? Is it my earnest wish to improve the state of my own heart by comparing it with what I allow to be the only perfect rule of faith and practice? Do I only read to get over my morning's task, the omission of which would make me uneasy, merely to fasten a series of facts on my memory? or do I really desire to make the great truths of the incarnation of the Son of God, of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of a living faith, a sound repentance, an entire conviction that, of myself I can do nothing; not merely a speculative system to be recognized at church, but to be transfused into the life? Do I adopt religion as an hereditary, national profession, necessary to my credit, or as a thing in which I have a momentous personal interest? Do I propose to apply what I read to the pulling down those high imaginations, and that false security of which my Bible shows me the danger, and which its doctrines are calculated to subdue? Do I labour after the attainment of those heavenly dispositions, the exhibition of which I have been admiring? Have these vivid declarations of the unsatisfactoriness of the world at all cooled my ardour for its enjoyments? Shall I read here this holy contempt for the littleness of its pursuits, this display of its fallacies and deceits, and yet return this very evening to the participation of diversions, the exposure of whose emptiness I have been approving? Shall I extol the writer who strips off its painted mask from the world, and yet acts as if the morning lecture had brought no such discovery? Nay, perhaps, it may be one of my subjects of conversation to recommend a book, of whose little efficacy in my own case I am giving a practical example.

Do I not periodically pray, 'Make me to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting,' and yet am I not as shy of the society of those who are distinguished for more than common sanctity, as if it carried contamination with it? And does not the very term convey to my mind a discreditable idea, compounded of fanaticism and hypocrisy?

After all, I may have been wrong. If respectability were security, the young ruler in the Gospel had been in no danger, for his attainments were above the ordinary standard, and his credit was probably high. It is time to come to something like certainty; to inquire, whether I do cordially believe what I should be ashamed not to profess; whether my religion lives in my memory or my heart, on my lips or in my life, in my profession or my practice? It is time to examine, whether I have much more distinct evidences of divine truth than those who do not acknowledge the Gospel to be a revelation from heaven; to inquire, why, if my understanding be somewhat more enlightened, such illumination is not more perceptible on my heart? Why the fruits of the Spirit,' so far from 'abounding' in me, scarcely appear, if those fruits are indeed 'love, peace, and joy in believing?'

Let not the fear of labour, or the dread of pain, prevent you from endeavouring to obtain a clear view of your state. Let not a pusillanimous apprehension of reproach or ridicule prevent your following up your convictions. There is not any thing that is unreasonable, much less any thing that is impossible, required: no degree of zeal, or measure of earnestness, but what you see every day exerted in a worse cause. Take your measure from the world, not in *what* you shall pursue, but in the energy with which you shall urge the pursuit. Only devote to religion as much time as the worldly devote to dissipation; only set your affections on Heaven as intensely as theirs are set upon earth, and all will be well: or take your measure from your former self; take at least as much pains to secure your eternal interests as you have formerly taken to acquire a language or an art. Read the word of inspiration with the same assiduity with which you have studied a favourite classic; strive with as much energy to acquire a thorough insight into the corruptions of your heart, and the remedy proposed for their cure, as you have exerted in studying the principles of your profession, or the mysteries of your calling. Inspect your consciences as accurately as your expences, be as frugal of your time as of your fortune, and as careful of your soul as of your credit. Be neither terrified by terms, nor governed by them.

In reading those heart-searching writers, whose principles are drawn from the source of all truth, and who are only to be trusted as they are analagous to it, be not offended with some strong expressions. They expressed forcibly what they felt powerfully. The revolting term of *sinner*, which has, perhaps, made you throw aside the book, as thinking it addressed only to the perpetrators of great crimes, as fitter language for the prisons and the hulks, than for the polished and the pleasing, is addressed to every one, however profound his knowledge, however decent his life, however amiable his manners, who lives without habitual reference to God. Be more than honest, be courageous; boldly apply it to yourself. Though your character is unstained with any disgraceful vice, though you regularly fulfil many relative duties, yet if you are destitute of the prime duty, the love of God in Christ Jesus, you stand in need of such a forcible address as we have been supposing. The discovery will be no dishonour. The dishonour consists in not feeling your state, in not struggling against it; in not applying with humble fervour for assistance to the Fountain of grace and mercy.

Take comfort that you have great advantages over many others. You have few bad habits to retract; you have no scandalous vices to combat; you have already with certain persons acquired a degree of influence by your good qualities; with others, you have acquired it by your very defects, and, as you are not suspected of enthusiasm, your usefulness will not be impeded by having that suspicion to repel. You will continue to do, in many respects the same things which you did before. The exterior of your life may be in many points nearly the same. But, even the same actions will be done in another spirit and to another end. Religion will not convert you into misanthropes, insensible to all the dear affections which make life pleasant. It does not wish to send you with the

hermits of old to the deserts of Thebais, it only wishes you to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in your own families, and among your own connexions. Not one of the proper forms and harmless habits of polished society will be impaired, they will be rather improved by this mutation of the mind. Christian humility will be aiding all the best purposes of good breeding, while it will furnish a higher principle for its exercise. You may express this change in your character by what name you please, so that the change be but effected.—It is not what you are called, but what you are, which will make the specific distinction between the character you adopt, and that which you have quitted. You read the Bible now, but between reading it mechanically and spiritually, there is as much difference as between pouring a fluid on the ground and distilling it. The one 'cannot be gathered up, afterwards; from the other, we extract drop by drop, a precious and powerful essence.

Search, then, diligently, the word of eternal life, enriched and ennobled as it is with the chain and the accomplishment of its prophecies, with the splendor of its miracles; with the attestation of its martyrs, the consistency of its doctrines; the importance of its facts; the plenitude of its precepts; the treasury of its promises; the irradiations of the Spirit; the abundance of its consolations; the peace it bestows; the blessedness it announces; the proportion of its parts; the symmetry of the whole,—altogether presenting such a fund of instruction to the mind, of light to the path, of document to the conduct, of satisfaction to the heart, as demonstrably prove it to be the instrument of God for the salvation of man.

CHAP. XIX.

On Habits.

Habits are those powers of the mind which arise from a collection or rather a successive course of ordinary actions. As they are formed by a concatenation of those actions, so they may be weakened by frequent and allowed interruptions; and if many contiguous links are wilfully broken, the habits themselves are in danger of being totally demolished.

If we may be allowed to change the metaphor, we would observe that good habits produce a sound healthy constitution of mind; they are tonics which gradually, but infallibly, invigorate the intellectual man.—A silent course of habits is a part of our character or rather conduct, which in a great measure depends on industry and application; on self denial and watchfulness, on diligence in establishing right pursuits, and vigilance in checking such as are pernicious. Habit being an engine put into our hands for the noblest and most beneficial purposes; and being one, which, having the free command of our own faculties, we have a power to use and direct—a power, indeed, derived from God as all our other possessions are—yet having this power, it rests with ourselves whether we shall improve it by a vigorous exertion in a right bent, or whether we shall turn it against our Maker, and direct the course of our conduct to the offending, instead of pleasing God.

Habits are not so frequently formed by vehement incidental efforts on a few great occasions, as by a calm and steady perseverance in the ordinary course of duty. If this were uniformly followed up, we should be spared that occasional violence to our feelings, that agitating resistance, which, by wasting the spirits, leads more feeble minds to dread the recurrence, of the same necessity which induces a painful feeling, the consequence of negligence, even where there is real rectitude of heart; while the regular adoption of right habits, indented by repetition, establishes such a tranquillity of spirit, as contributes to promote happiness no less than virtue. The mind, like the body, gains robustness and activity by the habitual exercise of its powers. Occasional right actions may be caprice, may be vanity, may be impulse, but hardly deserve the name of virtue, till they proceed from a principle which habit has moulded into a frame; then the right principle which first set them at work continues to keep them at it, and finally becomes so prevalent, that there is a kind of spontaneity in the act, which keeps up the energy, without constant sensible reference to the spring which first set it in motion. Good habits and good dispositions ripened by repetition into virtue, and sanctified by prayer into holiness. If we allow that vicious habits persisted in, lay us more and more open to the dominion of our spiritual adversary, can we doubt that virtuous habits acquire proportional strength from the superinduced aid of the Spirit of God?

The more uniform is our conformity to the rules of virtue and purity, the less we may require to be reminded of the particular influence of the motive. We need not, nor indeed can we, recur every moment to the exact source of the action; its flowing from an habitual sense of duty will generally explain the ground on which it is performed. If the heart is kept awake and alive in a cheerful obedience to God, the immediate motive of the immediate act is not likely to be a bad one. Many actions, indeed, require to be deliberated on, and whatever requires deliberation before we do it, demands scrutiny why we do it. This will lead to such an inquest into our motive as, if there be any want of sincerity in it, will tend to its detection.

Notwithstanding what has been urged above as to the exercise of constant assiduity in preference to mere occasional exertion, we would be understood to offer this counsel rather to the proficient than to the novice. As the beginnings are always difficult, especially to ardent spirits, such spirits would do well, particularly at their entrance on a more correct course, to select for themselves some single task of painful exertion, which, by bringing their mental vigour into full play, shall afford them so sensible an evidence of the conquest they have obtained, as will more than repay the labour of the conflict. A friend, of the Author was so fully aware of the importance of thus taming an impatient temper, that she imposed upon herself the habit of beginning

even any ordinary undertaking with the most difficult part of it, instead of following the usual method of proceeding from the lower to the higher. If a language was to be learnt, she began with a very difficult author. If a scheme of economy was to be improved, she relinquished at once some prominent indulgence; if a vanity was to be cut off, she fixed on some strong act of self-denial which should appear a little disreputable to others, while it somewhat mortified herself. These incipient trials once got over, she had a large reward in finding all lesser ones in the same class comparatively light. The main victory was gained in the onset, the subsequent skirmishes cost little.

If it be said that the effort is too violent, the change too sudden, we apprehend the assertion is a mistake. When we have worked up ourselves, or rather are worked up by a superior agency to a strong measure, it becomes a point of honour, as well as of duty, to persist; we are ashamed of stopping and especially of retreating, though we have no witness but God and our own hearts. Having once persevered, the victory is the reward. A slower change, though desirable, has less stimulus, less animation, is less sensibly marked; we cannot recur, as in the other case, to the hour of conquest, nor have we so clear a consciousness of having obtained it.

But the conquest we have won we must maintain. The fruits of the initiatory victory may be lost, if vigilance does not guard that which valour subdued. If the relinquishment of evil habits is so difficult, it is not less necessary to be watchful, lest we should insensibly slide into the negligence of such as are good. What we neglect, we gradually forget. This guard against declension is the more requisite, as the human mind is so limited, that one object quickly expels another. A new idea takes possession as soon as its predecessor is driven out; and the very traces of former habits are effaced, not suddenly, but progressively; no two successive ideas being, perhaps, very dissimilar, while the last in the train will be of a character quite different, not from that which immediately preceded, but from that which first began to draw us off from the right habits; the impression continues to grow fainter, till that which at first was weakened, is at length obliterated.

If we do not establish the habit of the great statesman of Holland, to do only one thing at a time, we shall do nothing well; the whole of our understanding, however highly we may rate it, is not too much to give to any subject which is of sufficient importance to require an investigation at all; certainly is not great enough to afford being split into as many parts, as we may choose to take subjects simultaneously in hand. If we allow the different topics which require deliberation to break in on each other; if a second is admitted to a conference, before we had dismissed the first, as neither will be distinctly considered, so neither is likely to obtain a just decision. These desultory pursuits obstruct the establishment of correct habits.

But it requires the firm union of a sound principle with an impartial judgment to ascertain that the habit is really good, or the mischief will be great in proportion to the pertinacity. For who can conceive a more miserable state, than for a man to be goaded on by a long perseverance in habits, which both his conscience and his understanding condemn? Even if upon conviction he renounces them, he has a long time to spend in backing, with the mortification at last, to find himself only where he ought to have been at setting out.

Without insisting on the difficulty of totally subduing long-indulged habits of any gross vice, such as intemperance; we may remark, that it requires a long and painful process—and this even after a man is convinced of its turpitude, after he discovers evident marks of improvement—to conquer the habits of any fault, which, though not so scandalous in the eyes of the world, may be equally inconsistent with real piety.—Take the love of money for instance. How reluctantly, if at all, is covetousness extirpated from the heart, where it has long been rooted! The imperfect convert has a conviction on his mind, nay he has a feeling in his heart, that there is no such thing as being a Christian without liberality. This he adopts, in common with other just sentiments, and speaks of it as a necessary evidence of sincerity. He has got the whole christian theory by heart, and such parts of it as do not trench upon this long-indulged corruption, he more or less brings into action. But in this tender point, though the profession is cheap, the practice is costly. An occasion is brought home to him, of exercising the grace he has been commending. He acknowledges its force, he does more; he feels it. If taken at the moment, something considerable might be done; but if any delay intervene, that delay is fatal; for from feeling, he begins to calculate. Now there is a cooling property in calculation, which freezes the warm current that sensibility had set in motion. The old habit is too powerful for the young convert, yet he flatters himself that he has at once exercised charity and discretion. He takes comfort both from the liberal feeling which had resolved to give the money, and the prudence which had saved it, laying to his heart the flattering unction, that he has only spared it for some more pressing demand, which, when it occurs, will again set him on feeling, and calculating, and saving.

Some well-meaning persons unintentionally confirm this kind of error. They are so zealous on the subject of sudden conversion, that they are too ready to pronounce, from certain warm expressions, that this change has taken place in their acquaintance, while evident symptoms of an unchanged nature continue to disfigure the character. They do not always wait till an alteration in the habits has given that best evidence of an interior alteration. They dwell so exclusively on miraculous changes, that they leave little to do for the convert, but to consider himself as an inactive recipient of grace; not as one who is to exhibit, by the change in his life, that mutation, which the divine Spirit has produced on his heart. This too common error appears to arise, not only from enthusiasm, but partly from want of insight into the human character, of which habits are the ground-work, and in which right habits are not less the effect of

grace for being gradually produced. We cannot, indeed, purify ourselves, any more than we can convert ourselves, it being equally the work of the Holy Spirit to infuse purity, as well as the other graces, into the heart; but it rests with us to exercise this grace, to reduce this purity to a habit, else the Scriptures would not have been so abundant in injunctions to this duty.

'We must hate sin,' says bishop Jeremy Taylor, 'in all its dimensions, in all its distances, and in every angle of its reception.' St. Paul felt this scrupulousness of Christian delicacy to such an extent, that, in intimating the commission of certain enormities to the church of Ephesus, he charged that *they should not be so much as named among them*. This great master in the science of human nature, a knowledge perfected by grace, was aware that the very mention of some sins might be a temptation to commit them; he would not have the mind intimate with the expression, nor the tongue familiar with the sound. He who knew all the minuter entrances, as well as the broader avenues to the corrupt heart of man, knew how much safer it is to avoid than to combat, how much easier the retreat than victory. He was aware, that purity of heart and thought, could alone produce purity of life and conduct.

From the unhappy want of this early habit of restraint, many, who are become sincerely pious, find it very difficult to extricate their minds from certain associations established by former habits. Corrupt books and evil communications have at once left a sense of abhorrence on their hearts, with an indelible impression on their memory. They find it almost impossible to get rid of sallies of imagination, which, though they once admired as wit, they now consider as little less than blasphemy. The will rejects them; but they cling to the recollection with fatal pertinacity. Vices, not only of the conduct, but of the imagination, long indulged, leave a train of almost inextinguishable corruptions behind them. These are evils of which even the reformed heart does not easily get clear. He who repents suddenly, will too often be purified slowly. A corrupt practice may be abolished, but a soiled imagination is not easily cleansed.

We repeat, that these rooted habits, even after the act has been long hated and discontinued, may persist in tormenting him who has long repented of the sin, so as to keep him to the last in a painful and distressing doubt as to his real state; but if this doubt continue to make him more vigilant, and to keep alive his humility, the uneasiness it causes may be more salutary than a greater confidence of his own condition. Many have complained, after years of sincere reformation, that they did not possess that peace and consolation which religion promises; not suspecting, that their long adherence to wrong habits may naturally darken their views and cloud their enjoyments. Surely the man whose mind has abandoned itself for years to improper indulgences has little right to complain, if bitterness accompany his repentance, if dejection break in on his peace. Surely he has little right to murmur, if those consolations are refused to him, which, in the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, are sometimes withheld from good men, who have never been guilty of his irregularities in conduct, who have never indulged his disorders of heart and mind. When we see holy men, to whom this cheerful confidence is sometimes denied, or from whom, in the agonies of dissolving nature, it is withdrawn, shall they whose case we have been considering, complain, if their's are not all halcyon days, if their closing hour is rather contrite than triumphant? But this, if it be not a state of joy, may be equally a state of safety.

The duty of keeping up this sense of purity is of great extent. One of the many uses of prayer is, that, by the habit of breathing out our inmost thoughts of God, the sense of his being, the consciousness of his presence, the idea that his pure eye is immediately upon us, imparts a temporary purity to the soul, which it vainly aims to maintain in an equal degree in its intercourse with mankind. The beatitude of the promised vision of God is more immediately annexed to this grace; and it is elsewhere said, 'that every one who hath this hope, purifieth himself, as He is pure.' The holy feliciy of the creature is thus made to depend on its assimilation with the Creator. There is a beautiful intimation of the purity of God in the order of construction in the prayer taught by our Saviour. We pray that *his name may be hallowed*, that is, that our hearts, and the hearts of all men, may honour his holy name; may be deeply impressed with a sense of his purity and holiness, before we proceed to the subsequent petitions. We thus invest our minds with this preparatory sentiment in order to sanctify what we are about to implore. In addition to the necessity of stated prayer for the promotion of purity, it may be observed, that if, by habitual devotion, we bend our thoughts into that course, they will in time almost voluntarily pursue it. The good effect of prayer will, on our return to society, be much increased by the practice of occasionally darting up to heaven, a short ejaculation, a laudatory sentence, or some brief spontaneous effusion. This will assist to stir up the flame which was kindled by the morning sacrifice, and preserve it from total extinction before that of the evening is offered up. We may learn from the profane practice of some, that an ejaculation takes as little time, and obtrudes less on notice, than an oath or an exclamation. It implores in as few words, the same divine power for a blessing, whom the other obtests for destruction.

One great benefit of science is allowed to be derived from its habituating the mind to shake off its dependance upon sense. Devout meditation, in like manner, accustoms it not to fly for support to sensible and material things, but to rest in such as are intellectual and spiritual. By a general neglect of serious thinking, virtue is sometimes withered and decayed; in minds where it is not torn up by the roots, there remains in them that vital sap which may still, upon habitual cultivation, not only vegetate, but produce fruit.

One great obstacle to habitual meditation must not be passed over. It is the pernicious custom of submitting to the uncontrolled dominion of a roving imagination. This prolific faculty produces such a constant budding of

images, fancies, visions, conjectures, and conceits, that she can subsist plentifully on her own independent stock. She is perpetually wandering from the point to which she promised to confine herself when she set out; is ever roaming from the spot to which her powerless possessor had threatened to pin her down. We retire with a resolution to reflect: Reason has no sooner marshalled her forces, than this undisciplined run-away escapes from duty, one straggler after another joins the enemy, or brings home some foreign impertinence. While we meant to indulge only a harmless reflection, we are brought under subjection to a whole series of reveries of different characters and opposite descriptions. Fresh trains obliterate our first speculations, till the spirit sinks into a sort of deliquium. We have nothing for it, but resolutely to resist the enfeebling despot. Let us stir up some counteracting force: let us fly to some active employment which shall break the charm, and dissolve the pleasant thraldom. No matter what, so it be innocent and opposite. We shall not cure ourselves by the sturdiest resolution not to do this thing which is complained of, unless we compel ourselves to do something else. Courageous exertion is the only conqueror of irresolution: vigorous action the only supplanter of idle speculation.

Habits are not arbitrary systems and predetermined schemes. They are not always laid down deliberately as plans to be pursued, but steal upon us insensibly; insinuate themselves into a train of successive repetitions, till we find ourselves in bondage to them, before we are aware they have gotten any fast hold over us. But if rooted bad habits are of such difficult extirpation, that, as we have already observed, they not only destroy the peace of him who continues them, but embitter the very penitence of him who has forsaken them, there is a class of beings in whom they are not yet inveterate. If I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, never could they be employed to a more important purpose, than in representing to my youthful readers the blessedness of avoiding such habits now, as may take a whole life to unlearn.

O you to whom opening life is fresh, and gay, and tempting! you who have yet your path to choose, whose hearts are ingenuous, and whose manners amiable, in whom, if wrong propensities discover themselves, yet evil habits are not substantially formed—could you be made sensible, at a less costly price than your own experience, that though through the mercy of God, the long-erring heart may hereafter be brought to abhor its own sin, yet the once initiated mind can never be made to unknow its knowledge, nor to unthink its thoughts; can never be brought to separate those combinations which it once too fondly cherished:—how much future regret, how much incurable sorrow might you spare yourselves! If you would but reflect that though in respect of the past, you may become inwardly penitent, you cannot become as you now are, outwardly innocent, and that no repentance can restore your present happy ignorance of practised evil,—you would then keep clear of a bondage from which you perceive the older and the wiser do not, because they cannot, commonly emancipate themselves.

But, supposing a young man is so happy as to escape the grosser corruptions, yet, if he have a turn to wit and ridicule, he should be singularly on his guard against the false credit which ludicrous associations will obtain for him in certain societies. An indelicate but pointed jest, a combination of some light thought with some scriptural expression, a parody which makes a serious thing ridiculous, or a sober one absurd,—these are instruments by no means harmless, not only to him who handles them, but also in the hands of subalterns and copyists, who having, perhaps, no faculty but memory and seldom using memory but for mischief, retain with joy, and circulate from vanity, what was at first uttered with mere random thoughtlessness. Profane dunces are the busy echoes of the loose wit of others. With little talent for original mischief, but devoting that little to the worst purposes, they pick up a kind of literary livelihood on the stray sarcasms and fugitive bon mots of others, and are maintained on what the witty throw away. If even in the first instance there were nothing wrong in the thing itself, there is mischief in the connexion. Whatever serves to append a light thought to a serious one, is unsafe: both have, by frequent citation, been so accustomed to appear together, that when, in a better frame of mind, the good one is called up, the corrupt associate never fails to present itself unbidden, and, like Pharaoh's blasted corn, devours the wholesome ear.

'Man,' says one of the most sagacious observers of man, Dr. Paley, 'is a bundle of habits.' The more we attend to them, the more distinctly we shall perceive those which are right, and the more dexterity we shall acquire in establishing them. In setting out in our moral course, we can make little progress, unless we suffer ourselves to be governed by certain rules; but when the rules are once worked into habits, they in a manner govern us. We lose the sense of that restraining power, which was at first unpleasant though self-imposed. To illustrate this by an instance;—The accomplished orator is not fettered by recurring to the laws of the grammarian, nor the canons of the dialectician, though it was by being habitually trained in their respective schools, that he acquired both his accuracy and argument. Yet, while he is speaking, it never occurs to him, that there are such things in the world as grammar or logic. The rules are become habits, they have answered their end, and are dismissed.

If we consider the force of habit on amusements: stated diversions enslave us more by the custom of making us feel the want of them, than by any positive pleasure they afford. By being incessantly pursued, they diminish in their power of delighting; yet such is the plastic power of habit and such the yielding substance of our minds, that they become arbitrary wants, absolute articles, not of luxury, but necessity. Strange! that what is enjoyed without pleasure cannot be discontinued without pain! The very hour when, the place where, the sight of those with whom they have been partaken, present associations which we feel a kind of difficulty

and uneasiness in separating. We are partly cheated into this imaginary necessity, by seeing the eagerness with which others pursue them. Yet if it were not an artificial necessity, a want not arising from the constitution of our nature, those would be unhappy who are deprived of them, or rather, who never enjoyed them. There is a respectable society of Christians among us who carry the restriction of diversions to the widest extent. Yet among the number of amiable, virtuous, and well instructed young Quakers, whom I have known, I have always found them as cheerful and as happy as other people. Their cheerfulness was perhaps more intellectual than mirthful; but their happiness never appeared to be impeded by complaints at the privation of pleasures to which habit had not enslaved them—a habit which, when carried too far, destroys the very end of pleasure, that of invigorating the mind by relaxing it.

It is a proof that the Apostle considered conversion in general a gradual transformation, when he spoke of the renewing of the inward man *day by day;* this seems to intimate that good habits, under the influence of the Spirit of God, are continually advancing the growth of the Christian, and conducting him to that maturity which is his consummation and reward. The grace of repentance, like every other, must be established by habit. Repentance is not completed by a single act, it must be incorporated into our mind, till it become a fixed state, arising from a continual sense of our need of it.—*Forgive us our trespasses* would never have been enjoined as a daily petition, if daily repentance had not been necessary for daily sins. The grand work of repentance, indeed, accompanies the change of heart; but that which is purified will not, in this state of imperfection necessarily remain pure.—While we are liable to sin, we must be habitually penitent.

A man may give evidence of his possessing many amiable qualities, without our being able to say, therefore, he is a good man. His virtues may be constitutional, their motives may be worldly. But when he exhibits clear and convincing evidence, that he has subdued all his inveterate bad habits, weeded out rooted evil propensities; when the miser is grown largely liberal, the passionate become meek, the calumniator charitable, the malignant kind; when every bad habit is not only eradicated, but succeeded by its opposite quality, we would conclude that such a change could only be effected by power from on high, we would not scruple to call that man religious. But, above all, there must be a change wrought in the secret course of our thoughts; without this interior improvement, the abandonment of any wrong practice is no proof of an effectual alteration. This, indeed, we cannot make a rule by which to judge others, but it is an infallible one by which to judge ourselves. Certain faults are the effects of certain temptations, rather than of that common depravity natural to all. But a general rectification of thought, a sensible revolution in the secret desires and imaginations of the heart, is perhaps the least equivocal of all the changes effected in us. This is not merely the cure of a particular disease, but the infusion of a sound principle of life and health, the general feeling of a renovated nature, the evidence of a new state of constitution.

Candid Christians, however, who know experimentally the power of habit, who are aware of the remainders of evil in the best men, will not rashly pronounce that he, who, while he is struggling with some long cherished corruption falls into an occasional abberation from the path he is endeavouring to follow, is therefore not religious.

If our bad habits have arisen from dangerous associations, we must dissolve the intercourse, if we would obviate the danger. Good impressions may have been made on the heart, yet the indulged thought, and especially the allowed sight of that object which once melted down our better resolutions, may melt them again. If we would conquer an invading enemy, we must not only fight him in the field, but cut off his provisions. It may be difficult, but nothing should repel the effort but what is impossible. Now in this there is no impossibility, because the thing not being placed out of our reach, there needs only the concurrence of the will. If we humour this wayward will, it is at our peril. What we persist in indulging, we shall every day find more difficult to restrain. Perhaps on our not resisting the very next temptation, will depend the future colour of our life—the very possibility of future resistance. That which is now in our power, may, by repeated rejection, be judicially placed beyond it. Infirmity of purpose produces perpetual relapses. Temptation strengthens as resistance weakens. We create, by criminal indulgences, an imbecility in the will, and then plead the weakness, not which we found, but made.—Half measures produce more pain and no success. They are compounded of desire and regret, of appetite and fear, of indulgence and remorse. While we are balancing, conditioning, temporizing, negotiating with conscience, we might be singing Te Deum for the victory.

What force we take from the will by every repetition, we give to the habit. A faint endeavour ends in a sure defeat. Temptation becoming more importunate, if its incursions are not resisted, if its attacks are not repelled, the habit will get final possession of the mind; encouragement will invite repetition; where it has been once entertained, it will find a ready way; where it has been received with familiarity, expulsion will soon become difficult, and afterwards impossible. The Holy Spirit, whose aid perhaps we have faintly invoked, and firmly rejected, is withdrawn. But if we are sincere in the invocation, we shall be firm in the resistance; if we are fervent in the resolution, we shall be triumphant in the conflict.

What we have insisted on is the more important, because all progressive goodness consists in habits; and virtuous habits, begun and carried on here with increasing improvement and multiplied energies, are susceptible of eternal proficiency. When we are assured that the effect of habits will not cease with life, but be carried into eternity, it gives such an enlarge-

ment to the ideas, such an expansion to the soul, that it seems as if every hour were lost in which we are not beginning or improving some virtuous habit.

As we were originally made in the image of God, so shall we, by the renovation of our minds, of which our improved habits is the best test, be restored, in an enlargement of our moral powers, to a nearer resemblance of Him. Were it not that there is a participation, in all rational minds, of the same qualities in kind, though infinitely different in degree, the perfections of God would not so repeatedly be held out in Scripture as objects of our imitation. It would have been absurd to have said, 'as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy.' 'Be ye holy, for I am holy,' would not have been a reasonable command, unless holiness and purity had been one common moral quality of the nature, though unspeakably distant in the proportion between that perfect Being from whom whatever is good is derived, and the imperfect creature who derives it. Surely it is not too much to say, that though we can only attain that low measure, of which our weak and sinful nature is capable, yet still to aim at imitating those perfections, is a desire natural to the renewed heart: and it may be considered as a symptom that no such renovation has taken place, when no such desire is felt.

How could we attempt to trace the perfections of the divine nature, if he had not stamped on our mind some idea of those perfections? We may bring these notions practically home to our own bosoms, possessing, as we do, not only natural ideas of the divine rectitude, but having these notions highly rectified, and confirmed by the Scripture representation of God; if, instead of adopting abstract reason for a rule of judging, which is often too unsubstantial for our grasp, we set ourselves to consider what such a perfect Being is likely to approve, or condemn, in human conduct, and then, comparing not only our deductions, but our practice, with the Gospel, adopt or reject what that approves or condemns.

—

CHAP. XX.

On the inconsistency of Christians with Christianity.

We have, in three former chapters,* ventured to address a class of Christians whose lives are decorous, and whose manners are amiable; but who, from the want of having imbibed the vital spirit of Christianity, and having, therefore, formed their principles on imperfect models, seem to have fallen short of that excellence of which their characters are susceptible.

We presume now to address a very different class; persons acknowledging, indeed, the great truths of Christianity, but living either in the neglect of the principles they profess, or in practical opposition to the theory they maintain; yielding to the tyranny of passion or of pleasure, governed by the appetite or the caprice of the moment, and going on in a careless inattention to the duties inculcated by an authority they recognize. The lives of the persons previously considered are commonly better than their profession, the lives of those now under contemplation are worse. These seem to have more faults, the other more prejudices. The others are satisfied to be stationary; these are not aware that they are retrograde. The former are in a far better state; but there is hope that the latter may find out that they are in a bad one. The one rest in their performances, with little doubt of their safety; the other, with a blind security, rest in the promises, without putting themselves in the way to profit by them.

If the whole indivisible scheme of Christianity could be split into two portions, and either half were left to the option of these classes; those formerly noticed would adopt the commandments from an assurance of being saved by their obeying them; these under present consideration, would choose the creed, from a notion that its mere adoption would go near to exonerate them from personal obedience. The others intend to earn heaven by their defective works: these, overlooking the necessity of holiness, flatter themselves, when they think at all, with the cheap salvation of a mental assent. We all desire to be finally saved. There is but one opinion about the end; we only differ about the means. Many fly to the merits of the Redeemer to obtain happiness for themselves hereafter, who do not desire his Spirit to govern their lives now, though he has so repeatedly declared, that he will not save us without renovating us. To suppose that we shall possess hereafter what we do not desire here, that we shall complete then, what we do not think of beginning now, is among the inconsistencies of many who pass muster under the generick title of Christians.

The contest between heaven and earth seems to be reduced to one point, *which* shall possess the heart of man. The bent of our affections decides on the object of our pursuit. When they are rightly turned by his powerful hand, God has the predominance. It is the grand design of his word, of his Spirit, of all his dispensations, whether providential or spiritual, to restore us to himself, to recover the heart which sin has estranged from him. Where these instruments fail, the original bias governs, and the world has the entire possession.

Prospective prudence is esteemed a mark of wisdom by the world, and he who professed the wisdom which is from above, observes that 'the prudent man foreseeth.' Here the Bible and the world appear at first sight to be in strict accordance; but they differ materially, both as to the distance and the object of their forecast. How prudent do we reckon that man who denies himself present expenses, and waives present enjoyments, that he may more effectually secure to himself future fortune! We observe that his discreet self-denial will be amply rewarded by the increasing means of after indulgence. But if this very man were to extend his views still further, and look for the remuneration of his abstinence, not to a future day, but to a future life, he would not with his worldly friends, advance his character for wisdom. While he looks

* An inquiry why some good sort of people are not better.

to a distant point of time he is commended, but he forfeits the commendation, if he overlooks all time, and defers the fruition of his hope, till time shall be no more.

It is indeed this partial looking forward, this fixing the eye on some point of aggrandizement, or wealth, or some other distinction, which obstructs our view of the final prospect; or it is the excess of immediate gratification, the delights of sense, the blandishments of the world, which prevent us even from thinking of it. While the sensualist incloses himself in a narrow circle, beyond which his eye does not penetrate, the Christian, like the mariner, steers his course not by his sight but his compass. In any imminent distress, indeed, men almost naturally fly to their Maker. It is rather an impulse than a principle. Yet it is in prosperity, that we most need his assistance. Success, which is perhaps more eminently the hour of peril, is more rarely the hour of prayer. There is an intoxication attending on prosperous fortune, especially, while it is new, which diverts the spirits from communication with the Father of spirits. The slackening of devotion under success seems to imply a conviction that, prosperity being a gift of God, our prayers have been heard; we have obtained his blessing, and, having the end of our prayers granted, we insensibly lessen our endeavours to please Him whom our success induces us to believe that we have already pleased. Thus, having made things even, men seem to set out on a new career; they plan new indulgences, additional projects of splendour, or of gratification; they assiduously multiply those pleasant instances of obedience which the poet has flatteringly told us we give when we 'enjoy.' But the object of enjoyment is not seldom the instrument of destruction. Anacreon was choked by a grape-stone.

But, if prayer to the Fountain of all Good is occasionally offered up by the negligent Christian, it is not likely to be heard, because it is not his own prayer. We do not mean, because it is the composition of another; that, as it does not lessen its value, does not obstruct its acceptance. If the feelings go along with the petitions, they will be heard; if the affections are bound up with the words, they will be accepted. It is not because they are forms, but because the little interest taken in them, renders them mere forms. It is not because they are precomposed, but because they are used with constraint—are repetitions, not effusions. It is using them without that condition of mind, without that cordial voluntary approach to the divine presence, to which is annexed the gracious promise of being in *no-wise* cast out; of that state of mind which David suggested when he said, 'My heart (not my lips) hath talked of Thee:' when, in answer to the command, 'Seek ye my face,' warm and instant from the heart he fervently replied, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

If it be objected, that we can no more pray up to scriptural expressions than we can live up to scriptural injunctions, does not the one, equally with the other, indicate the high aspiring nature of religion? Does it not remind us, that our aims must be always more lofty than the possibility of our attainments; that if the one be hitherto low and earthly, the other must be high and heavenly; bounded by no limits, restrained by no measures, but improving with our moral improvement, strengthening with our spiritual strength?

You do not deny that 'the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation,' because it is asserted by an authority you respect. But to whom is it such a power? You reply from your memory, 'To all them that believe.' But of what use is a belief that is obviously uninfluential? You are unconsciously falling into the very error of the fanatic whom you so justly condemn. Like him you value yourself upon your full assent to the truth of Christianity. You go beyond him, for you profess to have reason as well as faith on your side. But is not that an irrational faith which professes to believe, that a principle is productive of salvation, and yet to rest contented while you are not governed by that principle? You bring your reason and your will into the ordinary transactions of life; the one impels and the other guides, in almost all concerns except that one grand concern, where the impulse and the guidance are incomparably the most important. You allow, indeed, in a general way, that the thoughts and pursuits of religion are the most worthy of attention, and then act as if you held no such opinion, made no such avowal.

It is a wonderful instance of the union of justice and mercy in God, that in the very act of making sin the marked object of his displeasure, he makes the penitent offender the chosen object of his compassion. But revelation will afford no shelter to those who screen themselves under its promises, while they live in opposition to its laws; to those who desire to retain their vices, without relinquishing their hopes; who take refuge in the very mercy they are abusing; who think they exalt the efficacy of grace, by believing it will cancel, not only all the sins they have committed, but all they intend to commit. The truth is, if they really believe God, it is only when he promises. But shall he not also be believed when he threatens, or shall we desire him to abrogate half his word, that while we are violating one part, the other may confirm our security? Is not this subterfuge as much an abdication of common sense, as a contempt of divine justice?

Unhallowed passions too frequently enlist both wit and argument into their service, the one laughs at their excesses, the other reasons them away. Wit is no longer employed in her rightful office, to decorate virtue, but to ridicule her. Reason is no longer called in to control appetite, but to plead for it. Indulgence confirms its dominion. As the empire of sense is fortified, that of reason declines. Even God is audaciously, though, perhaps, gayly arraigned, for having made corrupt inclinations natural, and then punishing their indulgence; as if he had not given reason to restrain, as if he had not bestowed religion to control them.

It is not an uncommon practice to assent to the truth of Scripture, and even to approve and recommend it, without *really* believing it; for the test of belief is to make it the rule of judg-

ing ourselves, and endeavouring to act as if we expected to be judged by it. The christian doctrines will always produce christian affections and dispositions in the mind, in the proportion in which they are understood, in the degree in which they are cordially embraced. The temper and conduct of the Christian is a faithful reflection of the doctrines of Christianity; and the improvement of his life is the only evidence of his having received its truths into his heart.

Of all the ingredients of which our intellectual and spiritual character is compounded, that is the most doubtful, the most unfixed, and the most easily shaken, which is in reality the basis of all our other principles, as well as the foundation of all our future hopes—we mean faith. It is the want of this living root which accounts for all the deformities in the mind, all the anomalies in the character of man. Disguise it as we will—and we confine not the charge to the profligate, or even to the negligent—it is unpractical belief which so sadly depresses our moral standard.

Yet the negligent in practice are not seldom confident in the profession of their faith. As they are not often troubled with any doubt of themselves, of course they institute no very deep inquiry whether they do sincerely believe the promises of Christianity. But, however frivolous *they* may deem the scrutiny, it was once thought to be a matter worthy of a serious inquiry among Christians, whether their hopes were well-founded. Better men than many who now reckon themselves good, entertained doubts of their own state, and could not rest till they came to something like decision on this momentous question. Is then that sober inquiry, which was in them the truest mark of prudence, now to be treated as a needless scrupulosity, if not as an evidence of an unsound mind? Are the doctrines of the Gospel on which they bestowed so much thought and labour unworthy of yours? Is that which was to them so serious a concern as to demand a combination of their best faculties and their most fervent endeavours, become so easy as to be comprehended at a glance, and adopted in a moment? Are the difficulties, which cost them so much reflection, prayer, and self-denial, miraculously removed, and made smooth for you? Are things so altered, that while they worked out their salvation with fear and trembling, you are secure of an easy, indolent, almost unsolicited salvation? Are corrupt human nature and the requisitions of the Gospel now so suddenly accommodated to each other? Are sin and safety grown so congruous? Is it become so natural to fallen creatures to be reconciled to God and goodness, without that long and serious process which was once thought so indispensable to its accomplishment? Is that superinduced principle which the most acute nation in the world accounted 'foolishness,' and the most perverse people a 'stumbling-block,' become to you so easy of apprehension, so accessible to your reach, so facilitated to your corruptions, so certain of attainment, as to supersede the labour of examination, as to be acquired without the trouble of pursuit? If to you the end is made sure, with the utter ignorance of the way, and a general neglect of the means; if *you* find that path clear which they found intricate; if *you* obtain, without seeking, that assurance, by the bare promise of which they were supported; if all this be really your happy case, it must have been achieved by some power which has not been before revealed, by some miracle which neither the Old or the New Testament has either recorded or predicted.

You would do well then, besides looking back to the oracles of truth, to inquire of your authorized instructors, if there has been any change effected in the requirements of Christianity, any deductions made in its demands, any facilities introduced into its scheme, any revelation by which the old impediments have been removed, and a shorter cut to heaven cleared out? Consult some real Christians of your acquaintance; inquire if *they*, despising and forsaking the good old way, found repentance, pardon, holiness, victory over the world, and acceptance with God, so slight, so rapid, yet so certain a thing? Ask if they became Christians by chance or by inheritance, if they were 'renewed in the spirit of their minds, by the mere form of baptism? Inquire if their entrance into a religious life cost them no sacrifice, if their attainments were accidental, if they maintained the ground once gained without effort, if they improved it without prayer, if they were established in it without divine assistance?

The truth is, the persons in question either do not think the defect of faith a fundamental error, or they suppose they believe when they do not. When this last is the case, they rest satisfied in their mistake; for people do not seek to extricate themselves from a doubt in which they do not feel entangled. It is, however, practical unbelief which quenches the vital flame of virtue.

Unbelief is not, as you are too ready to suppose, merely one among the many evils of the heart, but it is the root and principle of them all. That faith is the foundation of virtue is implied to have been clearly understood by the Apostle when he speaks of 'the *obedience* of faith.'

How hotly do we resent it, if *our* veracity is suspected! How indignantly do our hearts rise, if our fellow-creatures do not believe our word on occasions the most trivial! Yet we do not tremble at the idea of not believing the word of Omnipotence: yet do his promises excite no ardent desires in our hearts after the blessings they reveal.—And could this possibly be the case, if we confidently credited the truth of the promises?

If men only suspect there is some new road which may lead to fame or fortune, or any desirable acquisition, how sedulous are they in their inquiries after it, how anxious to ascertain its probability, how zealous to turn the information to their profit! But when *this* grand concern is in question, so far from investigating, they take it for granted, they assume, not only that the thing is true, but that their interest in it is safe. It scarcely costs them a thought, they are seldom embarrassed with a doubt. So far from reflecting how the difficulties which lie in the way may be removed, they do not inquire whether they exist, much less what they are;

and with those who would point them out, they evade the subject to save the trouble.—We need look no further for the solution of our indifference than that we do not earnestly desire the promised felicity, because of our practical incredulity.

If an intelligent Chinese had been made acquainted with the high privileges and sublime hopes of a Christian—what advantages he possesses here, and what prospects he has in reversion, not contingent, but certain, provided he turned his advantages to the securing of his prospects; what promises had been made him from an authority he allowed, and by a veracity he trusted;—what a glorious people would he expect to find in a society of such highly privileged beings!—Would he not look for cordial obedience to *his* laws in whose will they daily express a complete acquiescence?—for unbounded love and charity among creatures who periodically confessed that their own sins could not be forgiven, if they forgave not the sins of others?—for a gratitude among creatures who recognized one common redemption, which should bear some little proportion to his love by whom such an astonishing redemption had been wrought? Would he not conclude that nothing could be wanting to their happiness but an entrance on that immortality for which they must be so well prepared—nothing wanting to their perfection, but the visible presence of Him whom they acknowledge to be its source and centre?—and that in the mean time they were living the life of saints preparatory to their commencing that of angels?

But when, on a personal intercourse, he observed that the lives of so many beings, the essence of whose religion is love, was a scene of strife and emulation—that this community of Christians which he thought like the city of Jerusalem, was at unity with itself, had rather be at unity with any thing than with each other—split into parties and torn asunder by conflicting interests!—when he saw that the professors of a religion, founded in humility and self-denial, could be proud without reproach, and voluptuous without discredit; when he saw, in so many other respects, the inconceivable distance between our lives and our patterns, our hopes and our aims, would he not believe the whole had been a misrepresentation?—Would he not rejoice, like a true patriot, to find that there was less difference between the inhabitants of Pekin and London than between the professor of Christianity and the Gospel from which he took his rule?—Would not this be his natural inference, either that Christianity is not true, or that its avowed disciples do not believe it? When he compared their actual indulgences with their exalted expectances, would he not believe that their religion was founded on a proclamation for present enjoyment, and not on a promise of future blessedness? In any event, would he conceive that eternal glory was to be obtained without an effort, I had almost said without a wish?

CHAP. XXI.

Expostulation with the inconsistent Christian.

The most valuable truths, though known, are useless, if not applied. Though men were acquainted with the magnetic power of the loadstone before the Christian era, it remained an object of idle admiration, till within a very few centuries. The practical use of the needle being at length found out, its application to its true end gave mankind access to unknown regions, and opened to them a new world. If such were the application of religious knowledge to its proper end, it would, indeed, open to us a world, in which, not only one but every adventurer, might be rewarded, not with discovery merely, but with possession.

To this unseen world God has shown us the way by his word, has smoothed that way by his grace, has promised us the direction of his Spirit; has given us free access by his Son, revealing him to us at once, as our propitiation and our pattern. Shall we not, then, thankfully embrace this propitiation, and keep this pattern before our eyes? And though our nearest approaches will be infinitely distant, let us come as near to it as we can, and let us frequently try, by the only true touchstone, whether we have more receded or approached. If we find our deflection has been greater since the last examination, let the discovery put us upon praying more fervently, watching more vigilantly, and labouring more earnestly. If we have gained any ground, let us try to secure our advantages by pushing our progress. What a low standard, and yet it was a high one in his estimation, did he propose, who said to his friend, 'If thou art not Socrates, yet live as one who would be glad to be Socrates!' To what an elevated pitch were *his* views raised, who, disdaining an inferior model, said, 'Be ye like minded with Christ!'

Every degree of goodness is only a ray from the central perfections of God. There is no shadow of right in any of his creatures but is indicative of his immeasurable goodness. The human virtues had originally a stronger resemblance to, and more intimate correspondence with, the Being from which they emanated, but by man's apostacy, the analogy was not only impaired, but nearly lost. Yet a sufficient knowledge of what is good, an ample power of judging, remains to us, to convince us, that religion is a very reasonable principle, that it is addressed to our understandings as well as to our affections. God, by the revelation of himself and his purposes, does not destroy, but strengthen, our natural notions of rectitude, our rational ideas of justice, our native feelings of truth and equity. The Scripture account of the moral perfections of God, and of the manner in which he will judge the world, is consonant to those notions which he has implanted in us. Christianity exalts, clears and purifies the light of reason, ennoble and elevates the dictates of natural conscience, but does not contradict them—does not subvert our ideas of justice, nor overturn our innate sense of right and wrong. Our nature, though full of perverseness in the will, is not so preposterous in her judgment as to believe that a revelation from God would ever teach a law in direct opposition to natural justice; that the illumination of the Gospel was meant to extinguish 'the candle of the Lord' set up in every human bosom. God would be inconsistent with him-

self, if he gave us the light of reason dim indeed, but still a light, and then gave us a revelation, not to clear that dimness not to enlighten that comparative darkness, but to oppose, eclipse, extinguish it.

To this capacity of judging, to this power of determining, and to your profession of faith, we venture to appeal. We are not arguing with you as with persons who deny the truth of Christianity, but addressing you as avowed believers, who neglect the application of that truth which the infidel denies. We do not propose any disallowed scheme, we do not offer any rejected doctrine, any disputed opinions; we do not invite your submission to any authority which you do not acknowledge. We suggest nothing but what your understandings assent to, nothing but what you profess to believe. Yet these truths you vitally disavow, this authority you actually renounce, this creed you practically subvert, if they do not furnish the ground of your conduct. You acknowledge all the verities of the Bible, but your lives are unaltered. Your hearts are impressible by all the tender human affections; awake to all 'the charities of father, son, and brother;'—Why are they untouched, just where they ought to be most sensible, languid where they should be vigorous, dead where they should show most vital energy?

There is in this conduct a double incongruity. The persons in question not only forbear to exhibit in their own lives those admirable effects which Christianity is so calculated to produce, but they do not like to see them produced to any great extent in others. They are not backward in branding those who exhibit, in their fair proportions, the practical effects of the doctrines they themselves profess to admire, with the suspicion of hypocrisy, or the reproach of extravagance. In the common course of affairs, nothing is more censured than *inconsistency*. In religion it is quite otherwise. It is thought criminal to make no religious profession; yet, to act consistently with that profession, to make the practice square with the principle, in short, to live as we believe, exposes a person to be suspected of a deficiency of sense, or of sincerity; subject him to a doubt, either of the integrity of his heart, or the sanity of his mind.

Christianity lays down plain rules for the conduct of those who profess it. The Bible is in the hands of this class of professors; but when a portion of it has been carelessly perused, it is considered as having done its office. It is laid down, and the reader, instead of applying to his conduct the law he has been studying, immediately applies to the law of custom, of fashionable acquaintance, of caprice, of appetite, for that rule which, in conversation he would acknowledge, was only to be found in the book he had been reading. In matters of faith, an indefinite assent is yielded; he only desires to be excused from the consequences they involve. He would indeed, like to cavil at some points, but an unexamined approbation costs less trouble; so he believes in the gross, occasionally, however, indulging a little levity to show his wit, and a few doubts to show his discrimination.

We do not act thus on other occasions. The arts we learn we turn to the purpose for which we learned them. The science we acquire we apply. The study of geometry is made applicable to practical purposes. The knowledge of mechanics is not studied for its own sake, but for the benefit of those, to whom the application brings so many conveniences. The fairest hand-writing would be of little value, if the use did not follow the acquisition. Yet if religion is not only of more allowed importance, but of more universal application, than all human knowledge put together, why is it not, like that, brought to bear on the purposes for which it was sent, the rectification of the heart and life? If we acknowledge the Bible to be the only unerring road-book to that land to which we are travelling, why, after consulting it in the closet, do we forget it on the journey, not only neglecting the direction it affords but pursuing contrary paths of our own devising.

It is a spectacle to excite the tenderest commiseration when we observe the excellent gifts of God to some of his most favoured creatures—when we see the brightest natural faculties improved by high cultivation, together with that degree of acquaintance with religion, which not only expels infidelity, but leads to a certain vague adoption of the christian creed—when we see men, not only rich in mental endowments, but possessed of hearts glowing with generosity and kindness—when we see such beings as much absorbed in the pursuits of time and sense, as dead to the highest ends of their being, limiting their plans to the present life as completely as if they did not believe in that immortality which yet makes part of their system!—to see them overlooking the excellences which may be attained in this state preparatory to their perfection in a better;—unobservant of that deep basis which God has laid in our very nature for the condition of future blessedness—forgetting how he has not only graciously put us in the way to attain it, but has exhorted, but has invited us, only to *consent*, only to *submit* to be eternally happy! When we hear the Saviour of sinners condescending to express this tender regret at their reluctance, 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.'—Who can, without sorrow, contemplate such a discrepancy between the practice and the destination, the pursuits and the interests, the low desires and the high possibilities, the unspeakable offers and the incorrigible blindness?

But in our lapsed humanity, sense, in opposition to faith, is too frequently the dictator. If we see through a glass, and that darkly, it is because the medium is clouded by the breath of sensuality. Appetite is the arbitrary power which renders every appeal to reason and religion fruitless. The pleasures of the present life have matter and substance, and we act as if those of heaven were dreams and visions. Self-love errs only in mistaking its objects, in putting the brief discipline which we are called to exercise here on a level with eternal suffering; it mistakes in fastening itself on the lower part of our nature, and forgetting that our souls are ourselves.

But surely God did not give his creatures such improvable powers, such strong notices of

himself, without some farther end and design than can be perfected in this brief state of being! He never would have given us a nature capable of knowing and loving him here, if it were not part of his scheme that our knowledge and love of him should be perfected in eternity. We are not the creatures of casualty. We did not come into this world by chance, or by mistake, for any uncertain end, or any undetermined purpose, but for a purpose of which we should never lose sight, for an end to which we should have a constant reference; that we might bring glory to God now, and be received by his grace to glory everlasting.

For though all the contributions of all the creatures in existence can add nothing to his inherent glory, yet he has condescended to declare that he will be glorified by us.—Instead of which, what misshapen ideas do not many form of God! How do they deface the plan of Providence! Were that commodious creed true, that mercy is his exclusive attribute, how safely might we sin on; the profligate would be as secure of pardon and acceptance as the penitent, the profane as the pious, the voluptuous as the self-denying, the sceptic as the believer, the lovers of pleasure as the lovers of God.

Instead of endeavouring 'to be conformed to the image of God,' according to his express command, do not too many thus form a god after their own image, by thinking him such a one as themselves? Do they not almost slide into the practice of the Epicureans, who having made a scheme of ease, indolence, and indulgence, for their conduct, prudently invented gods accommodated to their own taste and habits? In them there was consistency. It was making their faith of a piece with their practice, when they made their deities as careless, as sensual, and as pleasure-loving as themselves. But surely under a pure dispensation, to form a false and unworthy estimate of the character of the Supreme Governor of the universe, is scarcely less criminal than to deny his existence. Where is the difference between divesting him of his being, and of his perfections?

Our Saviour and his Apostle, in their classification of sins, frequently bring together such as appear to us to have a wide disparity. 'Emulation' is classed with 'strife,' 'variances' with 'idolatry,' 'revelling' with 'murder.' Those 'who mind earthly things' are coupled with those 'whose end is destruction.' In enumerating the offences which shall make his second coming so tremendously awful, Christ ranks the being 'overcharged with the cares of this life' —cares which we are apt to call prudence and industry—with sins, of which Christian industry and prudence would think with abhorrence.

If the apology we make is, that we are governed by example, if we plead the necessity of acting as others, especially as our acquaintance act, we intrench ourselves in excuses which have no analogy with our conduct on other occasions. We are never so disinterested as to think of being sick, or poor, or miserable for company. We never generously plead the necessity of involving ourselves in debt, because our friends are so involved—of being ruined, because those whom we love are ruined. Shall sympathy, civility, imitation, and a social spirit, then, be pleaded only on occasion of mischiefs that are irrevocable, reserved for errors that are irretrievable, for practices, the consequences of which will be irremediable?

It is a low degree in the scale of goodness with which they are contented, who congratulate themselves that they are not worse than others, and a death-blow to the noble ambition of piety when they are contented not to be better. If, indeed, they think they are perfectly happy now, they need look no farther. But before they answer this important question, are you happy? let them interrogate their own heart. If they ask it fairly, it will answer honestly, *I am not happy.* Happiness is incompatible with the state of their minds, with the nature of their pursuits. The very fondness for variety proceeds from an internal sense of indigence. They are satiated without being satisfied.—The ever-renewed and ever-frustrated attempts of the fabled daughters of Danaus, whose labour, a pagan poet tells us, *was infinite, and their punishment eternal*, is the disappointing life and lot of these mistaken votaries of worldly enjoyment. The prophet annexes to somewhat of the same discouraging pursuit, an awful explanatory reason, when he represents the error of those who 'hew out broken cisterns which hold no water,' to have originated in their 'forsaking the fountain of living waters.'

But even the most careless livers have not lost the natural sense of the moral quality of actions. They can reason upon them; they understand the rules they violate; they retain the perception of excellence; they preserve the feeling of kindness; they had rather be the objects of regard than dislike, if it could be acquired at a cheaper rate, than that of forming their conduct by the principles they approve. *They wish they were better*, while they make no effort towards being other than they are. Their very wish for amendment is so cold, so careless, and so slight, that it wants all the characters of repentance, all the energies of resolution, all the sincerity of reformation. While we sometimes hear from these persons, in addition to this wish, a general declaration, that *they hope they shall mend*, we seldom see any step taken in consequence of this profession; on the contrary, they are quieted for the time; they take a sort of heartless comfort in this better taste; they flatter themselves it is a proof they love virtue, though they neglect it. But they do not act thus in what truly interests them. If there is a scheme of amusement in view, the time is accurately settled, the party nicely adjusted, their punctuality is exact, there is neither delay nor excuse. It is only on matters of everlasting interest that they beg leave to postpone, what they would not be thought to reject. Among all the countless generations of frail and fallen humanity, incomparably the most numerous community, is the sect of *Postponers*. If, as some old divine quaintly observes, 'hell is paved with good intentions,' may we not say, that the postponers, of which multitudes are found in all ages, and in all churches, are the class that has contributed the greatest number

of squares to the tesselated pavement. It is not an inconsistency common to every member of this sect, to wish that the portion of his life which is gone by had been spent in virtue, while this wish is too feeble to stimulate his future days to those pursuits in which he laments the past were not spent?

You do not act thus inconsistently by any necessity of nature; depraved as the will is, in common with our other faculties, it does not necessarily rob you of the power of determining; it does not take from you the ability of imploring the strength you want. To choose the good, and to refuse the evil, is yet left to your option. Why do the Scriptures make such repeated and solemn appeals to the will, if its agency were so utterly involuntary? On this will there is no irresistible compulsion. On the supposition that this were not the case, all human laws would be unreasonable, all courts of judicature not only unjust but preposterous; all legal executions absurd as well as inhuman; for would it not be barbarous to punish crimes which the perpetrator was not left at liberty to avoid? In this case Ravaillac would have been guiltless, and Bellingham excusable.

Nor is it your reason which dissuades you from religion. If you would consult its sound and sober dictates, it would point to religion as naturally as the eye points to the object it would investigate, as the needle to its attracting point. It is not your reason but your corruptions which turn away your heart from religion, because it tells you that something is to be done in opposition to their sway, something to be opposed contrary to their nature, something to be renounced congenial with their gratification.

It is a fatal mistake to expect to get rid of an evil by trying to become insensible to it. To divert the attention in order to stupify the conscience, is almost imitating the malefactor about to be executed, who swallows cordials, which, if they allay his terrors, do so only by deadening his sensibility. Take, then, a distinct view of your state, and of your prospects. Deliberation is valuable, were it only on this ground, that while you are deliberating, there is an intermission of passion, there is an interval of appetite: as these intermit, better feelings have time to rally, better thoughts to come forward, better principles to struggle for operation.

If with hearts naturally inclined to evil (as what heart is not?) and in a world abounding with temptation, you have strayed widely from the strait path, you are not compelled to pursue it. We need continue in sin no longer than we love it. Close not then your heart against that grace which is offered to all; it will perfect the work it has once begun, if we do not wilfully oppose its operations. Let us not therefore lay *all* the blame on our natural conceptions as if we were compelled to sink under them. They will, indeed, continue to impede our progress, but unless aided by our inclinations, they will not finally obstruct it. But wilfully to sin on, and yet expect pardon through the merits of our Redeemer, looks like an impious plot to blind the eyes of Omniscience, and to tie the hands of Omnipotence. We shall always have this infallible criterion by which to judge of our state; we may be assured that our sins are not forgiven, if they are not mortified. We need not pry into our destination in the inscrutable decrees of the Almighty, but in our own rectified affections, our own subdued will. Let us never remit our diligence by any persuasion of our security, nor slacken our obedience by any fond conceit that our names are written in heaven.

But alas! the soul is full of the body, the intellect is steeped in sense. The spiritual life is immersed in the animal. Reason and appetite, instead of keeping their distinct natures, are in many instances so mixed and incorporated, that it is not always easy to decompose and reduce them to their separate principles. It is in want of cordial sincerity which prevents truth from being sought, and where she is not sought, she will not be found. Internal purity of heart, and sanctity of spirit, afford a fairer exhibition of religion, than the most subtle dogmas, and the most zealous debates.

If we seek peace in God, we shall never fail of finding it; if we look for it in the world, it is to look for a clear stream from a polluted source. We have a spirit within us that will occasionally, though unbidden, remind us of our high original, 'from what height fallen.' How widely have we wandered in search of the good we have lost! We have sought for it in the tumults of ambition, in the pleasures of voluptuousness, in the misleadings of flattery, in our own high imaginations, in the self-gratulations of pride, in the secret indulgence of that vanity, which, probably, it has been one part of our pride not to cure but to conceal. Let us begin to seek for it where alone it is to be found, where alone God has promised it—in the 'way' which he has opened, in the 'truth' which he has revealed, and in the 'life' which he has quickened.

Do not, then, any longer make religion an incidental item in your scheme of life. Do not turn over the consideration of it to chance; make it a part of your daily plan; take it up as a set business; give it an allotted portion in the distribution of your daily concerns, while you admit it as the pervading principle of them all. You carry on no other transaction casually; you do not conduct your profession or manage your estate by fits and starts. You do not expect your secular business will go on well without minding it. You set about it intently; you transact it with a fixed design; you consider it as a definite object. You would not be satisfied with it, if it brought you no return, still less would you be satisfied not to know whether it brought any return or not. Yet you are contented as to this great business of life, though you perceive no evidence of its progress. You see no absurdity in a religious profession which leaves you as indigent as it found you. Does it not look as if your sincerity, in one case, did not keep pace with your earnestness in the other; as if your religion was a shadow, and your secular concerns were the only reality?

Begin then to be distinct in your purposes, explicit in your designs, sincere in your pursuits. You profess to read the Scriptures occasionally; if the perusal has hitherto produced no sensible effect, this is only an additional motive for making the incidental practice habitual. Do not inter-

mit it under pretence that it has produced no benefit. It is a great thing to keep within the use of God's appointed means. If you had not some pleasure in even a casual perusal, you would avoid it altogether. The blessing which has been so long delayed perhaps has not been cordially requested; when earnestly desired it will not be finally withheld. Light precedes warmth in the daily course of nature. Begin then to consider that knowledge not turned to profit will be a grand article at the final reckoning. How many thousands have not even made the progress which you have made; have not attained that literal acquaintance with the Bible which you have attained. *They* are utterly, perhaps irreclaimably, ignorant. *You* have laid in, at least in your understanding, a certain though perhaps slender stock of materials, on which the divine light only waits to shine till you petition for it; that light which, if you will open your eyes to receive it, will shine more and more unto the perfect day. God has assured you in his word that he '*waits* to be gracious.' The compassionate father in the parable moved more eagerly to embrace his son, than the returning prodigal to meet the parent. He scarcely waited for his protestations; the pardon prevented the confession; he condescended to rejoice even in his *acceptance* of forgiveness.

It is not a new scheme which is promised to you; it is not an imaginary project, an untried device. There is nothing unreasonable in the hope held out; no elevation in piety but what with the offered aid is attainable; nothing but what multitudes have attained; not merely prophets and saints and holy men, but persons whose cases were as unpromising as yours; men labouring under the same corruptions; disturbed by the same passions, assailed by the same trials, drawn aside by the same temptations, exposed to the same dangerous world; long led astray by its customs, long enslaved by its maxims. The same grace which rescued them is offered to you. The same Spirit which struggled with their hearts is, perhaps, while you are reading these feeble lines, striving with yours. Resist not the impulse. Complete the assimilation. Let not the resemblance be more imperfect in its fairer features than in its more deformed. Imitate their noble resolution. Recollect the glorious promise made, 'to him that overcometh.' The same power which delivered them waits to deliver you. The ten thousand times ten thousand who now stand before the throne, were not innocent, but penitent—not guiltless men, but redeemed sinners. The same God waits to be gracious. The same Saviour intercedes. The same Spirit invites. The same heaven is open. Plead that gracious nature, implore that divine intercessor, invoke that blessed Spirit. Say not it is too late. Early and late are relative, not positive terms. While the door is yet open there is no hour of marked exclusion. So may an inheritance among the saints in light still be yours.

CHAP. XXII.

Reflections of an inconsistent Christian after a serious perusal of the Bible.

I PROFESS to believe that Christianity is true Its promises are high; but what have been its profits? It is time to inquire into its truth and its advantages. It never, indeed, pledged itself to confer honours or emoluments; but it engaged to bestow benefits of another kind. If the Christian is deceived in these, he has nothing to console him. Now what am I the better for Christianity? It speaks of changing the heart from darkness to light. What illumination has my mind experienced from it?—But here a doubt begins to arise. Am I indeed a Christian? What claims have I to the character?

Is there any material difference, whether I depend on heaven as a thing of course, to those who have been baptized, though they possess no corresponding temper and conduct; or whether I never reflect that there is a heaven, or whether I absolutely disbelieve that there is any such place? Is the distinction so decisive between speculative unbelief, practical infidelity, and total negligence, as that either of them can afford an assurance of eternal happiness in preference to the other? Yet while the thought of heaven never enters my mind, should I not hotly resent it as an injury, if any one disputed my title to it? Should I not treat him who advised me to a more serious life, as an enemy, and him who suspected I required it, as a calumniator? Is it not, however, worth the inquiry, whether my confidence of obtaining it is well founded: and whether any danger arises from my ignorance or unfitness?

If the scriptures be authentic—if, as I have always professed to believe, they indicate a state of eternal happiness, together with the means of attaining to it—then surely not to direct my thoughts to that state, not to apply my attention to those means, is to neglect the state and the things, for which I was sent into the world. Providence, doubtless, intended that every species of being should reach the perfection for which it was created. Shall his only rational creature be the only one that falls short of the end for which he was made? the only one who refuses to reach the top of his nature, who refuses to comply with his original destination?

If I were quite certain that I was not created for such a great and noble end as Christianity has revealed, I should then be justified in acting as a being would naturally act, who has no higher guide than sense, no nobler incentive than appetite, no larger scope than time, no ampler range than this world. And though I might then regret that my powers and faculties, my capacities and desires, were formed for so low a purpose, and their exercise limited to so brief a space, yet it would not, in that case, be acting inconsistently, to turn my fugitive possessions, and my contracted span, to the best account of present enjoyment.

But if I have indeed, as I profess to have, any faith however low, any hope however feeble, any prospect however faint, is it rational to act in such open opposition to my profession? Is it right or reasonable, to believe and to neglect, to avow and to disregard, to profess and to oppose, the same thing? Do I raise my character for that understanding on which I value myself, if, while a confession of a faith which has been

adopted by the wisest men in different ages, my temper is not, like theirs, subdued to it, my life is not, like theirs, governed by it.

I think this world more certain than the next, because I have the evidence of my senses to its reality; and because its enjoyments are present, visible, tangible. But the same being who gave my senses, gives also reason and faith; and do not these afford to the sincere inquirer other evidence of no less power? Even in many natural things, we receive the evidence of reason as confidently as the testimony of sense. Our reason informs us, that the things we see could not have been produced without a cause which we do not see: we might as well say they have no being, as that they had no cause—and yet the cause lies as completely out of our reach as the things of another world. The unseen things, then, may be as satisfactorily proved by other arguments, as the things we know are proved by our senses. But the highest evidence of things not seen is faith. Even this principle we admit in worldly things, but reject in spiritual. We should know very little of this earth, if we knew only what we have seen. Now we believe that a multitude of things exists which we never saw, and which few comparatively have seen. This is the evidence of faith in the testimony of the relater.

I see persons in the ordinary affairs of life act upon the mere report of authentic information; conduct concerns analogous to those whose success is made known to them by impartial evidence, and act confidently on the relation of credible witnesses; and they would be thought perverse and unreasonable, were not their conduct influenced by such competent testimony. Is it, then, only in the momentous concern of religion, where these appropriate evidences are allowed to be incontestible, where the revelation from heaven, where the attestation of undeniable witnesses, has established the truth in the minds of inquiring men beyond a doubt?—Is it only where the testimony is more unquestionable, and the object the most transcendantly important, that neglect is pardonable, that delay is prudent, that indifference is safe?

It is time to arrive at some decision on a question which, if it be any thing, is every thing; which, if it be indeed founded in infallible truth, involves consequences so vast, effects so lasting, that all the other concerns of the whole world shrink into nothing, when weighed against my individual concern in this single business.

That thinking mind which enables me to frame these reflections, that sentient spirit which suggests these apprehensions, those irrepressible feelings which drive out my thoughts, and force my speculations beyond the present scene, prove that I have something within me which was made for immortality. If, then, I am convinced of these truths, can I any longer hesitate to devote my best thoughts to my highest good, my chiefest care to my nearest concern, my most intense solicitude to my everlasting interests?

Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief! Convert my dead faith into an operative principle! Let my sluggish will be quickened, let my reluctant desires give some signs of life. Let it be an evidence of the real existence of my faith, that it is not inert.

We talk of the glory of heaven as coolly, and hear of it with as much indifference, as if it were the unalienable birth-right of every nominal Christian, and that our security left no room for our solicitude. But I now find, on examining it more closely, that the Bible speaks of a thing which Christians of my class neglect to take into the account; a *fitness* for that glory, a spirit prepared for that state, which God has prepared for them that love him. It not only promises them heaven, but quickens their desires after it, qualifies them for the enjoyment of it. Now, can I conscientiously declare that I possess, that I have endeavoured to possess, those desires, without which heaven is unattainable; those dispositions, without which, if it could be attained, it would not be a place of happiness? Is it, then, probable, arguing upon merely rational grounds, that God will receive me to his presence there, if I continue to live without him in the world? Will he accept me when I come to die, alienated from him in heart and thought as I have lived?

After all, uncertainty is no comfortable state. It is safer to seek a satisfactory solution to my doubts by serious inquiry; to seek tranquillity to my heart by earnest prayer. It is better to implore the promised aid, to strengthen my vacillating mind, even though I renounce a little present ease, a little temporary pleasure. If, indeed, avoiding to think of the evil would remove it, if averting my eyes from the danger would annihilate it, all would be well. But if, on the contrary, fearing it now, may avert it for ever, common sense, reasonable self-love, mere human prudence, compel me to make the computation of the relative value of time and eternity. I may, indeed, as I have frequently done, postpone my purpose to some future time. But then I am not so skilled in the doctrine of chances as to be quite certain that time may ever arrive. He that intends to reform to-morrow does not repent to-day. When delay is danger, is it not foolish to delay? Where it may be destruction, is it not something worse than folly? I will arise, and go to my Father, &c. &c. &c.

CHAP. XXIII.

The Christian in the World

'THE only doctrinal truth,' says bishop Sanderson, 'which Solomon insisted on, when he took the whole world for his large but barren text, was, that all is vanity.'—This was not the verdict of a hermit railing from his cell at pleasures untasted, or at grandeur unenjoyed. Among the sons of men, not one had sought with more unremitted diligence, or had wider avenues to the search, for whatever good either skill or power could extract out of the world, than Solomon. No one could judge of the sweets which can be drawn from this grand Alembic, with higher natural abilities, or with deeper experimental wisdom. He did not descant on the

vanity of the world so eloquently till he had considered it accurately, and examined it practically. He was not contented, like a learned theorist to collect his notions from philosophy, or history, or hearsay; he well knew what he said, 'and whereof he affirmed.' All upon which he so pathetically preached he had seen with his eyes, heard with his ears, and, in his widely roving search, had experienced in his own disappointed mind, and felt in his own aching heart. He goes on to prove, by an induction of particulars, the grand truth propounded in his thesis, the *vanity of the world*. He shows in a regular series of experiments, how he had ransacked its treasures, exhausted its enjoyments, and even to satiety revelled in its honours, riches, and delights. He had been an intellectual as well as sensual voluptuary, and had emptied the resources of knowledge as well as of pleasure. Then reverting in the close of his discourse to the point from which he had set out, he again pronounces, that all is vanity.

'The conclusion of the whole matter' which he draws from this melancholy argument, as finely exhibited as pensively conceived, is a solemn injunction to others to remember, what it is to be feared the preacher himself had sometimes forgotten, that the whole duty of man is to fear God, and keep his commandments: winding up his fine peroration with a motive in which every child of Adam is equally, is awfully concerned, '*because* God shall bring every work into judgment.'

May not every real Christian, while his heart is touched with the affecting truth of the text, be admonished by this solemn valedictory declaration? May he not learn the lesson inculcated at less expense than it was acquired by this great practical master of the science of wisdom? If another sovereign was told there was no royal way to geometry, the King of Israel has opened a royal way to a more divine philosophy. By the benefit to be derived from contemplating this illustrious instance of 'how little are the great,' the Christian may set out where Solomon ended. He may be convinced of the vanity of the world at a price far cheaper than Solomon paid for it, by a way far safer than his own experience. He may convert the experiment made by the royal Preacher to his own personal account. He may find in the doctrines of the Gospel a confirmation of its truth, in its precepts a counteraction to its perils, in its promises a consolation for its disappointments.

In this world, such as Solomon has vividly painted it, the Christian is to live—is to live, through divine assistance, untainted by its maxims, uncontaminated by its practices. Man being obviously designed by his Creator for social life, and society being evidently his proper place and condition, it seems to be his duty not so much to consider what degree of possible perfection he might have attained in that state of seclusion to which he was never destined, as how he may usefully fill his allotted sphere in the world for which he was made; how he may conscientiously discharge the duties to which he is plainly called by providential ordination. To think how he may acquit himself well in his actual state and condition, is clearly more profitable than to waste his time and spirits, in devising the best speculative scheme of life, to the adoption of which there is little probability of his ever being appointed.

We were not sent into this world with orders to make ourselves miserable, but with abilities, and directions, and helps, to search out the best possibilities of happiness which remain to beings, fallen from that state of moral and mental rectitude in which man was created; to make the best of the ruins of that perfect world whose beauty he had marred, and whose capacity of confering felicity he had fatally impaired. Human life, therefore, abounding as it does in blessings and mercies, is not the blissful vision which youthful fancy images, or poetry feigns, or romance exhibits. It is in a considerable measure compounded of painful and dull realities, and not a splendid tissue of grand events or brilliant exploits; it is to some an almost unvaried state of penury, to many a series of cares and troubles, to all, a state of probation. But the primeval punishment, the sentence of labour, like the other inflictions of Him who in judgment remembers mercy, is transformed into a blessing. And whether we consider the manual industry of the poor, or the intellectual exertions of the superior classes, we shall find that diligent occupation, if not criminally perverted from its end, is at once the instrument of virtue and the secret of happiness. Man cannot be safely trusted with a life of leisure.

As the character about to be briefly considered is presumed to be a real Christian, it would be superfluous, for two reasons, to insist that his vocation in the world must be lawful. It is not to be supposed that a religious man will ever engage in an employment that is illicit; and it is almost equally beyond supposition, that persons who are actually so engaged, will cast their eyes on a book whose tendency is serious.

But the most unexceptionable profession is not exempt from dangers. It requires strict watchfulness, not only to conduct the most useful undertaking in a right spirit, and with a constant eye to Him, to whom every intelligent being is accountable; it requires not only constant vigilance against the allurements of avarice and the baits of ambition, but it requires caution against the unsuspected mischiefs of embarking so widely, or plunging so deeply in any temporal concern, as almost necessarily to deteriorate the character. He embarks too widely, and plunges too deeply, however honourable be the undertaking, if it absorb the whole man—if it so crowd his mind with interfering schemes, and complicated projects, as to leave no time and no thought, and gradually no inclination for that reference which should be the ultimate end of all human designs.

It can never be too often repeated, however writers tire with saying, and readers with hearing it, that it is scarcely more necessary to address serious suggestions to men sunk in gross pursuits, than to that large, important, and valuable class, whose danger lies in the very credit, and dignity, and usefulness of their engagements. A thousand dissertations have been written, and yet the theme is not exhausted, on

that hackneyed but neglected truth, that *we are undone by lawful things*, by excess in things right in themselves, and which only become wrong by being inordinately pursued—pursued to the neglect of things more essential; when what is even laudable is exclusively sought, to the forgetfulness of what is indispensable. Things may not only be comparatively, but positively, good, and yet not be 'things which accompany salvation.' They may not only be intended to be instrumental, but actually be so, both in advancing the prosperity, and in restraining the disorders of this world, and so far be highly valuable, and yet the act may be substituted for that principle which should be its inspiring motive. The fault, however, is not in the thing, but in the mind, when useful actions are not done with a reference to the highest end. Of this reference a Christian will aim never to lose sight. He will, before he engage in the concerns of the day, prepare his mind by fervent devotion; not only imploring direction in the common course of action, and the expected occurrences of the day, but strength to meet those unknown occasions and unsuspected events, which, in human life, and especially in a life of business, so frequently occur. Without this panoply, he will not venture to engage with the world; but the armour which he put on in solitude, he will not lay aside in the field of battle; it was for that warfare he had buckled it on.

As the lawyer has his compendium of cases and precedents, the legislator his statutes, the soldier his book of tactics, and every other professor his *vade mecum* to consult in difficulties, the Christian to whichever of the professions he may belong, will take his morning lecture from a more infallible directory, comprehending not only cases and precedents, but abounding also with those seminal principles which contain the essence of all actual duty from which all practical excellence is deducible. The spirit of laws differ from all legal institutes, some of which, from that imperfection inseparable from the best human things, have been found unintelligible, some impracticable, and some have become obsolete. The divine law is subject to no such disadvantages. It is perfect in its nature, intelligible in its construction, and eternal in its obligation.

This sacred institute he will consult, not occasionally, but daily. Unreminded of general duty, unfurnished with some leading hint for the particular demand, he will not venture to rush into the bustle, trial, and temptation of the day. Of this aid he will possess himself with more ease, and less loss of time, as he will not have to ransack a multiplicity of folios for a detached case, or an individual intricacy; for, though he may not find in the Bible specific instances, yet he will discover in every page some governing truth, some rule of universal application, the spirit of which may be brought to bear on almost every circumstance; some principle suited to every purpose, and competent to the solution of every moral difficulty. Scripture does not, indeed, pretend to include technical or professional peculiarities, but it exhibits the temper and the conduct which may be made applicable to the special concerns of every man, whatever be his occupation. He will find in it the right direction to the right pursuit, the straight road to the proper end; the duty of a pure intention; and the prohibition of false measures to attain even a laudable object. No hurry or engagement will ever make him lose sight of that sacred aphorism so pointedly addressed to men of business, 'He that maketh haste to be rich shall hardly be innocent.' The cautionary texts he admired in his closet, he will not treasure up as classical mottos to amuse his fancy, or embellish his discourse, but will adopt as rules of conduct, and bring them into every worldly transaction, whether commercial, forensic, medical, military, or whatever else be his professed object. He will not adjust his scale of duty by the false standard of the world, nor by any measure of his own devising; he has but one standard of judging, but one measure of conduct—the infallible word of God. This rule he will take as he finds it, he will use as he is commanded; he will not bend it to his own convenience, he will not accommodate it to his own views, his own passions, his own emolument, his own reputation.

Here it may be asked, Why is not Scripture more explicit in description, more minute in detail? We find our self-love perpetually furnishing subterfuges for evading duties, and multiplying exceptions to rules. God, who knows all hearts, and foresaw their captiousness, might, it may be said, have guarded against it by more enlarged instructions. The holy Spirit, however, did not see fit to descend to such minutiæ, but, having given the principle, left man to the exercise of his reason, in the application of the general law to his particular case; for if he is left to the use of his judgment, it is not that he may pervert truth, but apply it. His understanding and rectitude are perpetually called into joint exercise, for that which is immediately the duty of one man, another may not be called to perform.

Not to distress the mind, therefore, with unnecessary scruples, nor to perplex it by a multiplicity of circumstances, some things are left indefinite. An incumbered body of institutes would have been too vast and complicated for general use; that time would be taken up in selecting them, which is better employed in acting upon them. Even were every particular of every duty, in all its bearings, circumstantially ramified, it would not so much direct the conduct, as furnish new pretences for neglecting it. Then, as now, it would be seen rather that the will is perverse, than the understanding unsatisfied. More amplification would not have lessoned objections. Those who complain now, that the rule is not explicit, would complain then, that it was tedious. A fuller exposition would neither have cleared doubts nor prevented disputes. It would then have been charged with redundancy, as it is now with defectiveness.

If the world carries contamination to the heart, it carries also to the right-minded a preservative; as the viper's blood is said to be an antidote for its bite. The living world is to such persons an improving exemplification of

the moral lessons of history. If we apply to our own improvement the recorded excellences or errors of which we read; if we are struck with the successes or defeats of ambition; the pursuits or disappointments of vanity; the sordid accumulations of avarice, or the wasting ravages of prodigality; if we are moved with instances of vice and virtue in men of whom we know nothing but what the historian is pleased to tell us, and of whom he perhaps knew not much more; if we read with interest of the violence of parties, of which both the leaders and the followers have been long laid in the dust; if we are affected, as every intelligent mind cannot but be affected, with these pictures of things, how much benefit may a well-directed mind derive from seeing them realized: from seeing the old scenes acted over again by living performers; from living himself among the *dramatis personæ* as one of the actors; from taking a personal interest in a repetition of things which he condemned or applauded when only coldly presented to his understanding, and at which his principles revolted or rejoiced, even in the dead letter of narrative. He now sees the same sentiments embodied, the same passions brought into action, similar opinions operating upon actual conduct.

If he is deeply touched when history presents to his view the errors of high and heroic minds, when it exhibits the abberrations of superior genius, how much more lively will be his regret, when he sees, among his own acquaintance, the ardour of a noble and ingenuous mind exclusively consumed on objects, which might indeed be accounted great, if this world were all, but which never gives any practical intimation that there is another. But how much more pungent will be his sorrow, when he observes lofty and sagacious spirits neglecting to make the most even of this brief state of being; —when he sees men who might have made the world a better thing than they found it, had they employed their superior powers of intellect in studying how they might please God, by promoting the best interests of his creatures; when he sees such understandings clouded by intemperance, such minds absorbed in studying the qualities of a race horse, or calculating the chances of a gaming table!

In another and a more estimable class of characters, he is struck with mingled admiration and concern, in observing what good and resembling imitations of religion are made by honour, sense, and spirit; how respectably moral honesty, kindness, and generosity may, to superficial observers, personate Christianity, may even execute the act of piety with an utter destitution of the principle. He sees in certain minds some masterly strokes of natural beauty, which at once dignify and embellish them, so as, on some occasions, to tempt him to forget that they are not religious. But these brilliant qualities are not infused into the entire character, the excellence is limited to a few shining points, and the hollows are proportioned to the heights. Rich in some splendid virtue, there is no uniformity in the principle; there is perhaps some allowed sin in the practice; while in the character of the real Christian, though there may be much infirmity, there is a desire of consistency—there is no deliberate transgression—there is even no unrepented error.

These living lessons the pious observer will turn to account. The impression thus made on his heart, from actual observation, will sink deeper, and be more durable, than the instruction to be obtained by a mere intellectual view of mankind, from information collected from writers, who are obliged to pick up facts, not from having witnessed them, but as they find them in preceding writers; men who know little of the causes of which they describe the effects, or the motives of the actions they record. History paints men, acute observation anatomizes them.

If he regret that his necessary duties in the world trench on the time he would gladly devote to religious pursuits, let him take comfort that these regrets, if sincere, are an earnest of his safety. The very corruptions to which he is witness, will experimentally convince him of the truth of a doctrine which is no where more completely learned than in the bustle of life. The perception of this evil in others, makes him watch against similar tendencies within; tendencies which only the grace daily invoked by him prevents from breaking out into action. This deep conviction of man's corruption, instead of imparing his benevolence, will improve it. It will teach him not to expect too much from so imperfect a being, as well as to bear with the errors which his belief of the doctrine had led him to expect. This, together with his intercourse with the world, will cure him of that mistake so common to persons who have not lived in it, that of expecting no faults in those which a fond imagination, on a first acquaintance, had led them to believe perfect, and who, on the inevitable discovery, become too strongly disgusted with errors and imperfections, on which they ought to have reckoned. He will never use his full conviction of the truth of which we have been speaking to the purposes of unworthy distrust, or base suspicion. On the contrary, though he will exercise his discernment in the knowledge of men, and his discretion as to the confidence to be placed in them, he will not be ever on the look out to detect, much less to expose their errors. Though he, 'loves not the world' in the Scripture sense of the term, he loves the individuals of whom it is composed, with the affection of sympathy. He will put a large and liberal construction on their actions, but he will not stretch that latitude to the vindication of any thing that is corrupt in principle, or criminal in conduct. Nor will he be always on the defensive in his intercourse with them: he will not act with the narrow selfishness of the sordid trader, who is jealous of every man with whom he has business to transact, on no higher ground than lest he should lose money by him; while he tolerates in his character every vice which will not interfere with his pecuniary transactions.

It is his aim to reconcile that charity which believeth all things with that discrimination of character which shows us, not only so many who are bad, but so much imperfection, we may

say, so much evil, in the comparatively good. To love and serve those in whom we at the same time perceive no little moral defect, is turning our spiritual discernment to a practical account. This principle, while it serves to preserve us from an undue admiration of others, will teach us to suspect these, or other defects, in ourselves.

The Christian in the world, anxious to improve his scanty leisure, will rescue from mere diversion those hours which cannot prudently be subtracted from business. To a man thus circumstanced, the Sunday is felt to be indeed a blessing; to him it is emphatically 'delight.' Instead of appropriating it as a day of premeditated conviviality, he converts it into a stated season of enjoyment of another kind. He hardly needs the injunction to 'remember' to keep it holy, though he is not unmindful, that, of the ten commandments, it is the only one prefaced with that admonition. He considers the observance as almost more his privilege than his duty. The expectation of its return cheers him under the perplexities of the week. He anticipates it as a rest here, and as a foretaste of eternal rest. He enlarges his pious exercises with the more satisfaction, as he is clearly assured that he is not on this day in danger of trenching on his professional duties; and, from this reflection his heart more warmly expands in gratitude to Him whose day it more immediately is. He feels that, if it were barely a season ordained by some public act, a royal proclamation enjoining it as a necessary interval between the labours which close one week, and those which began another, a contrivance of ease, a measure of political prudence or personal tenderness to prevent the bodily machine and the overlaboured mind from wearing out, he would be grateful for its institution: but to him the day comes fraught with benefits and blessings of a still higher kind. It is an appointment of God; *that* entitles it to his reverence; it is an institution of spiritual mercy; it is the stated season for recruiting his mental vigour; for inspecting his accounts with his Maker; for taking a more exact survey of the state of his heart; for examining into his faults; for enumerating his mercies; for laying in, by prayer, fresh stores of faith and holiness; for repairing what both may have lost in the turmoil of the week. His heated passions have leisure to cool; his hurried mind to regain its tranquil tone; his whole internal state to be regulated; his mistakes to be reviewed; his temper to be new set; his piety to be braced up to the pitch from which it may have been sunk in the atmosphere he had been breathing. The pious man of business relishes his family society and fireside enjoyments with a keenness not often felt by others. If 'the harp, and the tabret, and the tabret, and the viol,' are not always heard in his feasts, he does what those who listen to them do not always remember to do, for he considers the works of the Lord, and regards the operations of his hands.' It is not enough for the devoted Christian that his life is dedicated to him who gave it, his spirit is, as it were, exhaled in his service.*

* It is to be regretted, that the members of a learned and honourable profession, and which has produced so many exemplary characters, should appoint their consultations on Sundays. It is urged in excuse, that they cannot clash with any public courts or sittings on that day. The leading men, by this custom, force some of those whose practice is less established into a breach of their duty, against which their consciences perhaps revolt. Might not one of these two sacrifices obviate the necessity which is pleaded in its vindication? Might they not either reject such a superfluity of business as induces it—or, if that be too much to expect, might they not subtract the time from their social and convivial hours?

CHAP. XXIV.

Difficulties and advantages of the Christian in the world.

THERE are two things of which a wise man will be scrupulously careful, his conscience and his credit. Happily they are almost inseparable concomitants; they are commonly kept or lost together; the same things which wound the one, usually gives a blow to the other: yet, it must be confessed, that conscience and a mere worldly credit are not, in all instances, allowed to subsist together. God and our hearts—we speak of hearts which are looked into and examined—always condemn us for the same things—things, perhaps, for which we do not suffer in the opinion of the world: the world, in return, not seldom condemns us for actions, for which we have the approbation of God and our consciences. Is it right to put the verdict of such opposite judges on an equality, nay to abide by that which will be less than nothing when *his* sentence, whose favour is eternal life, shall be finally pronounced?

Between a wounded conscience and a wounded credit there is the same difference as between a crime and a calamity. Of two inevitable evils, religion instructs us to submit to that which is inferior and involuntary. As much as reputation exceeds every worldly good, so much, and far more, is conscience to be consulted before credit—if credit that can be called, which is derived from the acclamations of a mob, whether composed of 'the great vulgar or the small.'

Yet are we not perpetually seeing, that to secure this worthless fame, peace and conscience are sacrificed? For to what but a miserably false estimate of the relative value of these two blessings; what but the preference of character to duty—in support, too, of a rotten part of it—is it, that the wretched system of duelling not only maintains its ground, but is increasing with a frightful rapidity? If we have, perhaps, never heard of a truly religious man engaged in a duel,† it is not that, with all his caution, he is not liable to provocations and insults, as well as other men; nor that he has no quick sense of injuries, no spirit to repel attacks, and no courage to defend himself. He who bears insults is made of like passions with him who revenges them; his pride longs to break out if it dared; for even a good man, as the prelate quoted in the last chapter observes, 'has more to do with this one viper, than with all his other corruptions.'

† Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the first of our deistical writers, and the last hero of our ancient chivalry, with that fantastic combination of devotion and gallantry which characterized the profession of knighthood, tells us in the memoirs of his own life, that he strictly maintained the religious observance of the Sabbath, except when called out to fight a duel for a point of honour, which he seemed to have thought a paramount duty.

But, among other causes, his safety lies in this, that he has always endeavoured to keep clear of those initiatory offences which lead to this catastrophe; it is because he has been habitually governed by principles of a directly contrary tendency, and has not the lesson of forbearance to learn, when he is called upon to practise it: because he has not indulged himself in those habits, and as little as may be in those societies which lay a man open to the consequences of which ungoverned appetites are the source: because he has always considered pride and passion as the possible seeds of murder; an impure glance as the first approach to that crime which is the ordinary source of duelling—the combined violation of these two commandments, being as closely connected, in practice, as is their position in the Decalogue. It is observable, that while the shifts and stratagems to which a man is commonly driven by illicit connexions, so often lead to duelling, yet that the charge of that crime itself, or of any other equally atrocious, far more rarely provokes a challenge, than the charge of the lie, to which the crime has compelled him to resort. Can there be a more striking instance of the false estimate of character and virtue, than that the offence is not made to consist in the falsehood itself, but in the accusation of it.

The man of mere worldly principles keeps himself in the broad way, which, should events occur, and temptations arise to irritate him, may at any time lead to such a termination. His habits of life, his choice of associates, his systematic resolution to revenge every insult, makes his common path a path of danger. His pride is always ready primed; he carries the inflammable matter in his habit, and the first spark may cause an explosion; while the man of principle, in addition to all the other guards before enumerated, wants, indeed, but this single consideration to deter him from the spirit of duelling; that it is the act of all others which stands in the most determined opposition to the law of God, and the spirit of the Gospel; that it is a studied, deliberate, premeditated subversion of one of the most imperious duties of Christianity, by making it infamous to forgive injuries.

And even if a man be more correct in his habits, still if the maxims of the world, and not those of Christianity, govern him, he loses sight of the great principles which would restrain excesses in temper, as well as in conduct. He first loses sight of these, perhaps by negligence in private devotion, possibly by a careless attendance on public worship. Thus freeing himself from these observances, he loses sight of the obligations of religion, and losing this strongest 'muzzle of restraint,' it is the less wonder that a small provocation tempts him to offer bloody sacrifices to that fantastic but cruel idol, worldly honour. It is the less wonder that a neglected, even where there is not a perverted principle, should end in the murder of a friend, and the destruction of his own soul; for of a merely convivial friendship, a duel is no very uncommon termination.

But to return.—In the ordinary pursuits of life, the good man differs but little from others, in the keenness with which he embarks in enterprise, or in the diligence with which he prosecutes it; but he carries it on in another spirit; he is not less solicitous in the pursuit, but there is less perturbation in his solicitude; he makes no undue sacrifices to attain his object. He seeks the divine blessing, not that he may slacken his own exertions, but that he may be directed in them, supported under them. Sanguine, perhaps, by nature, he yet takes into the account the probabilities of disappointment: this, when it occurs, he bears as one, who, though careful of the motive and mode of his conduct, had put the affair into the hands of the Master of events. His failure does not discourage him from fresh exertions, when occasions equally right present themselves. He is grateful for success, but not intoxicated by it. Under defeat he is resigned, but not desponding. He measures the intrinsic value of an object by asking his own mind, though he thinks so highly of its importance now, what he shall probably think of it when his ardour is cooled, and especially, what he shall think of it when all things shall be brought into judgment. This question settled, either moderates or augments the interest he takes in it.

Knowing that whatever he proposes in the way of public good, is liable to be suspected of imprudence, or mistaken zeal, he turns this exposure to suspicion to his own advantage. It leads him to examine his project more accurately to spy out its weak side, if it have any; and to anticipate, by the operations of a well exercised judgment, the objections which his opponents are likely to make. Foreseeing the points which may create opposition, he guards against it, either by altering his plan, if defective, or preparing to defend it, if sound. One of his great difficulties, and yet it is his only security will be his custom of referring all matters in debate, 'to the law and to the testimony.' This will lead him constantly to oppose principles to expediency. Of this incommodious integrity, he must abide the censure and the consequences. He will have no share in the crooked arts and intrigues by which some men rise so fast, and become so popular. He will detest craft almost as much as fraud, and the pitiful shifts of a narrow policy, as much as he will love the light and open path of truth and honesty.—He doth not slacken in his undeviating strictness, though he is aware, that this is the quality which peculiarly exposes him to misrepresentation. Exertion, struggle, conflict, these are the trials for which he prepares himself. Thankful for tranquillity when it can be honestly obtained, enjoying repose when he has fairly earned it; he yet knows that this is not the world in which they are to be looked for with any certainty, or enjoyed with any continuance; and this conviction of its instability and fluctuation is one of the many arguments with which he seeks to arm himself against the fear of death.

The unequal distribution of the good things of this life, the inferior success of men of more virtue, higher talent, and a better outset, than others of his acquaintance, whose beginning was low, and whose deserts equivocal, remind him that prosperity is no sure test of merit, and that the favour of heaven is not to be estimated by

success. God, he recollects, has made no special promise of prosperity to his children. When given, it is to be esteemed no certain mark of his approbation; when withdrawn, it is often in mercy; when withheld, it is because God has higher designs for his less prosperous servants. As to himself, the events of every day teach him, that he had expected more from human life than it had to bestow, and that his disappointments arise not less from his own sanguine temper, than from the deceits of that world which it had overrated.

The world, especially, we may here remark, the commercial world, particularly in these awful times, is calculated to teach forbearance far more than sequestred life, because men often suffer so severely in their fortune and credit by the errors or misfortunes of others. If the good man suffer by his own fault, he will find a fresh motive for humility; if by the fault of another, for patience; if more directly from the hand of God, for submission. Whatever be the fluctuations of his fortune, his faith will gain stability, for he will discern an invisible hand directing all events for his ultimate good. If he is placed in a state of peculiar agitation, God intends to lead him by it to seek his rest where only it can be found. If in a state of singular difficulty, it is to show him his own weakness, and his immediate dependance on him, who gives strength to the weak. This principle admitted, will furnish new motives to watchfulness and prayer, without any diminution of activity or spirit.

His observations on the gradual process, by which the love of money monopolizes the hearts of others, teach him to guard his own against its encroachments. He sees that the first designs of men are commonly moderate. Few take in at one view all the length they go afterwards. They look not beyond a certain eminence. On this they fix as the summit of their desires. But what appeared high at a distance sinks when approached; is nothing when attained;—'Alps rise on Alps;'—a further distance presents a further height; this, they are sure, will bound their desires: this attained, they are resolved to retire and dedicate their lives and their riches to the end for which, they persuade themselves, they have been toiling. But, with the acquisition, the desire increases; wants grow out of riches. The moderate man is become insatiable. The principle thrives with the attainment of its object. Though hope is exchanged for possession, yet the restless principle continues to work, and will work on, unless a higher principle, by which he is every day less likely and less desirous to be governed, should arise to check it.

Society being composed of intelligent human beings, the wise man knows that something may be generally learned from it, relative to the human character; that some benefit may be reaped, even if little positive good appear in it; and more does sometimes appear, than we are willing to put to profit. Lessons may be extracted from the very faults of men; from the vehemence of their passions, the mistakes of their judgment, the blindness of their prejudice.

The Holy Scriptures frequently make the anxious diligence of men, in the pursuit of worldly advantages, a lesson which a better man would do well to improve upon in his higher pursuits. He may find in *their* industry a standard, though not a model: the wisdom he learns from this generation, he will convert to the purposes of the children of light. The world's wise man is ever on the watch for advancing his projects. If he contract an acquaintance of importance, his first thought is, how he may make the most of him; the Christian is equally careful to turn the acquisition of a pious friend to his own account, but with a higher view.

The mind, on the watch for improvement, will improve by the very errors of others.—Virtue, our divine Master has taught us, may take some profitable lessons from vice. The activity of the fraudful steward may stimulate the negligent Christian. From the perseverance of the malignant in their patient prosecution of revenge, he may learn fortitude under discouragements, and resolution under difficulties. Injuries may teach him the value of justice, may set him upon investigating its principle, and guarding against its violation. The wiliness of the designing may keep his understanding on the alert, and confirm the prudence it has excited. Temptations from without strengthen his powers of resistance; his own faults show him his own weakness, as it is foreign aggression which forms heroes, and domestic opposition which makes statesmen.

His thirst for human applause will be abated, when he observes in those around him, the unexpected attainment of popularity so soon followed by its unmerited loss. When he beholds the rapid transfer of power, it will more than whole tomes of philosophy, show him that 'favour is deceitful.' He will moderate his desires of great riches, when he sees by what sacrifices they are sometimes obtained, and to what temptations the possession leads. He will be less likely to repine that others are reaching the summit of ambition, whether they achieve it by talents which he does not possess, or attain it by steps which he would not choose to climb, or maintain it by concessions which he would not care to make. The pangs of party with which he sees some of his friends convulsed, and the turbulent anxiety with which they watch the prognostics of its rise and fall, keep him sober without making him indifferent. He preserves his temper with his attachments, and his integrity with his preferences, because he is habitually watching how he may serve the state, and not how, by increasing her perplexities, he may advance himself.

The use he thus makes of the world will not carry him to the length of entangling himself in its snares. Though he maintains a necessary intercourse with men of opposite character, he will not push that intercourse further than occasion requires. He will transact business with them with frankness and civility, but he will not follow them to any objectionable lengths. He is aware, that though a wise man will never choose an infected atmosphere, yet 'He who fixes our lot in life' will protect him in it in the way of duty, and will furnish an antidote to the contagion. A courageous piety doubles its caution when exposed to an impure air, but a pru

dent piety will never voluntarily plunge into it. It will never forget, that if the corruptions of the world are so dangerous, they are rendered so by those of our own hearts, since we carry about us a constitution disposed to infection. The true Christian will make a conscience of letting it appear, that he differs in very important points from many of those with whom business or society brings them into contact; lest, by the facility and kindness of his general behaviour, they should be led into an error as to his principles. For worldly men, having been accustomed to connect narrowness, reserve, and gloom, with serious piety, they might infer from his pleasant deportment and frank address, that his principles were as lax as his manners are disengaged.

He will, therefore, be careful, not unnecessarily to alienate them by any thing forbidding in his exterior; he will cheerfully fall in with any plan of theirs consistent with his own principles; and more especially, should it be any plan of benevolence and general utility, and one more promising than his own, he will never feel backward to promote it, through the mean fear of transferring the popularity of the measure to another. Yet he acts, nevertheless, as knowing there is no humility in a man's taking a false measure of his own understanding, and therefore does not give us his independence of mind, when the superiority of the scheme of the other does not carry conviction to his judgment. He will first clear his motive, and, next, his prudence in the measure, and then be as prompt in action as those who rush into it without deliberation or principle.

He keeps his ultimate end in view, even in the most ordinary concerns, and on occasions which to others may not seem likely to promote it. He knows that good breeding will give currency to good sense; that good sense adds credit to virtue, and even helps to strip religion of its tendency to displease.—By his exactness in performing the common duties of life more accurately than other men, he may lead them to look from the action up to the principle which produced it; and when they see the advantages arising from such carefulness of conduct, they may be induced to examine into the reasons; and from inquiring to adopting is not always a remote step. He may thus lead them into an insensible imitation, without the vain idea of presenting himself as a model; for he wishes them to admire, not him, but the source from which he draws both what he believes and what he is.

While he suggests hints for their benefit, he is willing they should think the suggestion their own; that they owe it to reflection, and not to instruction. Like the great Athenian philosopher, he does not so much aim to teach wisdom to others as to put them in the way of finding it out for themselves. His piety does not lessen his urbanity, even towards those, who are obviously deficient in some points, which he deems of high importance. If they are useful members of the great body of society, he is the first to commend their activity, to acknowledge their amiable qualities, to do justice to their speeches or writings, while they are disconnected with dangerous or doubtful objects. On general subjects he never labours to discredit their opinions, unless they obviously stand in the way of something of more worth. But all these cheerfully allowed merits will never make him lose sight of any grand deficiency in the principle, of any thing erroneous in the tendency.

Of his own religion he neither makes a parade nor a secret; he is of opinion, that to avow his sentiments, prevents mistakes, saves trouble, obviates conjectures, and maintains independence. He acknowledges them with modesty, and defends them with firmness. On other occasions, instead of shutting himself up in a close and sullen reserve, because others do not agree with him in the great cause which lies nearest his heart, he is glad that the general diffusion of knowledge has so multiplied the points at which well-educated men can have access to the minds of each other; points at which improvements in taste and science may be reciprocally communicated, the tone of conversation raised, and society rendered considerably useful, and sometimes in a high degree profitable.

But notwithstanding the clearness of his own spirit, and the intimations of an enlightened conscience, yet he carries about with him such a modest sense of his own liableness to what is wrong, as keeps up in his mind the idea that the error may possibly be on his side. This feeling, though it never makes him adopt through weakness the opinion of another, makes him always humble in the defence of his own. He opposes what is obviously bad with an earnest but sober zeal, a fervid but unboisterous warmth, a vigorous but calm perseverance.

He will not hunt for popularity; he knows that this is one of the common dangers from which even good men are not exempt; for after all, the mere good men of the world do not monopolize all credit. Highly principled and pious men form a powerful and increasing minority, which, by concord, firmness, and prudence, often makes no inconsiderable figure. When viewed collectively,

> 'Bright as a sun the sacred city shines.

Each individual, however, according as he contributes or may fancy he contributes to the brightness, is in danger of priding himself on the general effect. And many a weak or designing man, placing himself under the broad shelter of what he delights to call *the religious world*, limits his zeal to the credit of being accounted a member, instead of extending it to the arduous duties it imposes, and while he superciliously decries many a worthy person, who without the pretension, performs the functions, he is as full of the world as the world is of itself. Popularity thus sought after and obtained, whether within or without the pale, even of a religious community, is of a dangerous tendency, and a truly Christian mind will alike tremble to bestow or receive the praise.

But if the Christian character we have been faintly attempting to sketch, possesses a commanding station, either in fortune, rank, or talent, especially if he combine them; his character, without any assumption of his own, without

any affectation of superiority, will, by its own weight, its own attraction, above all, by its consistency, be a sort of rallying point, round which the well disposed, the timid, and the young, will resort to obtain a sanction, and to fortify their principles. For, if it is not the *prevailing* principle, there is yet much more piety in the world, than the pious themselves are willing to allow. If so strange a phrase may be allowed, we should almost suspect that, in a certain class, there is more good hypocrisy than bad; more who conceal their piety, than who make a display of it. Many, who are secretly and sincerely religious, want courage to avow their sentiments, want resolution to act up to them, either because the popular tide runs another way, or because they dread the imputation of singularity, and are afraid of raising a portentous cry against themselves.

The good man respects the world's opinion, without making it the leading motive of his conduct. He never provokes hostility by any arrogant intimation that he does not care what people think of him, a conduct not more offensive to others, than indicative of a self-sufficient spirit. He is careful to avoid a particular *cut*. He will not be pointed at for any trifling peculiarity. He fences in, not only his ordinary, but his best actions, with prudence, well knowing how much the manner may expose the matter to misrepresentation. He does this not merely for his own credit, but because, to a certain degree, with his reputation are involved the good of others and the honour of religion. He endeavours, as far as he can honestly do it, to remove prejudices, which an imprudent piety rather glories in augmenting, and thus widens the separation between the two classes of characters. Whereas, that which is intrinsically good should be always outwardly amiable. He, therefore, will not make his departure from the order which general usage has established, observable in any of the harmless and accredited modes of life. He will not voluntarily augment that wonder which his departure from the less innocent fashions of the world must excite. The wonder will be sufficiently great, why, in stronger cases, he should subject himself to a discipline different from theirs, and they will ask where is the use of aiming to be better than those whom they call good?

By the cheerful alacrity with which he performs and receives all acts of kindness, he gives the best answer to Lord Shaftsbury's character of Christianity, 'that it is so taken up with the care of our future happiness, as to throw away all the present:' a sneer which is about as true as the other sarcasms of this eloquent but superficial reasoner; for if religion does call for some sacrifices of pleasure and of profit, yet every part of its practice increases our real happiness, by the augmentation of our own virtue, as much as it advances that of others; by its promotion of kindness, beneficence, good will, and good order.

He not only refuses his time and his example to scenes of luxury and dissipation; his superfluous wealth has also a higher destination; he must not however, be expected to aim at a primitive frugality, many of the superfluities of life having in some measure, become classed among its necessaries. The spirit of a Christian can never be a penurious spirit. His habits of living will be proportioned to his rank and fortune, taking, however, the average expenditure of many of the more discreet. He will never, even on religious grounds, by the example of parsimony, furnish the sordid with a pretence for accumulation.

He has another powerful motive for avoiding extravagance. He knows that a well regulated economy is the only infallible source of independence. He will not therefore, lavish in idle splendour a fortune, that he may be driven to recruit by sacrifices, which by robbing him of his freedom, will diminish his virtue. He thinks that what Tacitus has said of a public exchequer is not less true of a private purse, that what is exhausted by profligacy, must be repaid by rapacity. This incommodious rectitude will expose him to the dislike of less correct men; for, after all that has been urged against the adoption of religious doctrines, it is not so much the strictness of opinion, as of practice, which renders a man obnoxious.

He may be of any religion he pleases, provided he will live like those who have none. If he be convivial and accommodating, they will not care if he worship Brama and Veeshnoo; though they would not perhaps forgive his professing the Hindoo faith, if it involved the necessity of their dining with him upon rice; nor would he be pardoned for embracing the doctrines of the Arabian Prophet while the Koran continues to prohibit the use of wine.

Though pleasure is not the leading object of his pursuit, he yet finds more than those, who spend their lives in pursuit of nothing else. He finds the range of innocent and elegant enjoyment sufficiently ample and attractive, without being driven for a resource, to the disqualifying grossness of sensuality or the relaxing allurements of dissipation. The fine arts, in all their lovely and engaging forms of beauty, the ever new delights of literature, whether wooed in its lighter graces, or sought in its more substantial attractions, the exchange

> From grave to gay, from lively to severe,

shed sweet, and varied, and exhaustless charms on his leisure hours, and send him back with renewed freshness, added vigour, and increased animation to his necessary employments.

Though the strictly pious man is more exposed to temptation in the world than in retirement, yet he finds in it reasons which stimulate him to more circumspection. He is aware that he lies more open to observation, and of course to censure. As he is more observed by others, he more carefully observes himself. He watches his own faults with the same vigilance with which worldly men watch the faults of others, and for the same reason, that he may turn them to his own profit; the more he is surrounded with temptations, the more he is driven to feel his want of divine protection. If his talents or exertions are flattered, he flies more earnestly to *his* direction, 'from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.' We appeal to the pious rea-

der, whether he does not frequently feel more circumspect and less confident in society from which he fears deterioration, than in that on which he depends for improvement; whether he does not feel a sort of perilous security in company, in which an expansion of heart lessens his self-distrust; and whether he has never, by leaning on the friend, looked less to Him 'without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy.

If in debate he is sometimes accused of showing too much warmth in defence of religion, while its opponent, by his superior calmness, establishes his own character for moderation and good temper, it is because it costs the latter little to manifest a coolness which is the natural effect of indifference.—The man who plays for nothing needs not be moved whatever turn the game may take; while he, whose dearest interests are at stake, will not easily hide the emotion which he cannot but feel. When king Soloman decreed, as a test of affection, that the living child should be cut in pieces, the pretended mother calmly submitted to the decision.—She had nothing to lose. Her hope was dead. She would enjoy seeing her competitor reduced to her own desolate state; while the real mother, who had a vital interest in the object to be sacrificed, was tortured at the proposal. The genuineness of the feeling betrayed the reality of the relation.

The Christian, circumstanced as we have described him, hardly dares wish for an uninterrupted smooth and prosperous course; for, though he endeavours to sit loose to the world, every severe disappointment or privation makes him feel that he still clings too fondly for it; every trial and every loss, therefore, make him relax something of the firmness of his grasp.

Is your Christian, then, perfect, you will perhaps ask? Ask himself. With deep and sincere self-abasement he will answer in the negative. He will not only confess more failings than even his accusers ascribe to him, but he will own what they do not always charge him with—sins. He will acknowledge that there is no natural difference between himself and his censurer, but that, through divine grace, the one prays and struggles against those corruptions, the very existence of which the other does not suspect.

The peace of the confirmed Christian lies not at the mercy of events. As on the agitated ocean, storms and tempests never divert the faithful needle from its invariable object, so the distractions of the world shake not *his* confidence in Him who governs it. He remembers that these winds and waves are still bearing him onward to his haven, while on the stormy passage, they enable him to exhibit a trying but a constant evidence that God may be honoured in all, even in the most unpromising situations. Even in the worst condition, a real Christian is sure of the presence of his Maker, not only of his essential presence, which he has in common with all, but the presence of his grace; not only the sense of his being, but the support of his promise. God never appoints his servants to a difficult station, but he gives them the assurance of assistance in it, and of support under it. The solemn injunction, 'Be strong and work,' thrice repeated by the prophet, to reprove the dilatory builders of the second temple, was effectually enforced by the animating promise which followed it; *I will be with you.* When the disciples were sent forth by their divine Master to the grandest, but most perilous task, to which embassadors were ever appointed, they must have sunk under the conflicts which awaited, the dangers which threatened, and the deaths which met them; but the single promise *I will be with you*, was to them strength, and light, and life. The Christian militant, though called to a milder warfare, has the same reiterated assurance; *I will be with you always even to the end of the world.*

CHAP. XXV.

Candidus.

CANDIDUS is a genuine son of the Reformation; but being a layman, he does not think it necessary to define his faith so constantly as some others do, by an incessant reference to the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies; though this reference would accurately express his sentiments: but, he observes, that it is become a kind of party standard equally erected by each side in intended opposition to the other, so that the equivocal ensign would not determine to which he belongs. He gives, however, the most indisputable proof of his zeal for these formularies, by the invariable conformity of his life and language to their principles.

From the warmth of his feelings, and the strength of his attachment to the church which fostered him, Candidus was once in no little danger of becoming a vehement party-man; he was, however, cured by a certain reluctance he found in his heart to undertake to hate half the world, which he found must be a necessary consequence.—Observation soon taught him, that Christians would be far more likely to escape the attack of unbelievers, if they could be brought to agree among themselves; but he saw with regret, that religion, instead of being considered as a common cause, was split into factions, so that the general interest was neglected, not to say, in some instances, nearly betrayed. And while the liege subjects of the same sovereign are carrying on civil war for petty objects and inconsiderable spots of ground, that strength, which should have been concentrated for the general defence, is spent in mutual skirmishes, and mischievous though unimportant hostilities; and that veneration of course forfeited, with which even the acknowledged enemy would have been compelled to behold an united Church.

Candidus is, however, firm in his attachments, though not exacting in his requisitions; catholic, but not latitudinarian; tolerant, not from indifference, but principle. He contemplates, with admiration, the venerable fabric under whose shelter he is protected. He adheres to it, not so much from habit as affection. His adherence is the effect of conviction, otherwise his tenacity might be prejudice. It is founded in education, strengthened by reflection.

confirmed by experience. But though he contemplates our ecclesiastical institutions with filial reverence himself, he allows for the effect of education, habit and conscience in others, who do not view them with his eyes. He is sorry for those who refuse to enter into her portal; he is more sorry for those who depart out of it, but far more concerned is he, for those who remain within her pale, with a temper hostile to her interests, with principles foreign to her genius, with a conduct unsanctified by her spirit.

Like a true lover, he delights not to expatiate on any imperfection she may have; but he will not, like an absurd lover, insist on any imperfection as an excellence. Persuaded that a mole or a pimple is no material diminution of beauty, he will no more magnify them into a deformity than he will deny their existence. His mind is so occupied with essential points, and so satisfied with their substantial worth, that he relinquishes whatever is of no vital importance to those microscopic eyes, which, being able to take in only the diminutive, value themselves on the detection of specks, as a discovery of their own, though keener eyes had discovered them long before, but slighted them as insignificant. Satisfied that it is the best of all the churches which exist, he never troubles himself to inquire if it is the best that is possible. In the church of England he is contented with excellence, and is satisfied to wait for perfection till he is admitted a member of the Church triumphant.

Candidus made early the discovery of a secret which Charles the Fifth did not discover, till by his ignorance of it, he had thinned the human race—the incurable diversity of human opinions. This irremediable difference he turned to its only practical purpose, not the vain endeavour to convince others, but the less hopeless aim of improving his own forbearance. He even doubted whether this disagreement, though a misfortune in the aggregate, was not even more calculated to promote individual piety, than an uniformity which would not have called this feeling into exercise.

The more he examines Scripture (and he is habitually examining it,) the more he is persuaded that the principles of his church are identically with the word of God; while he is enabled, by the same examination, to drink more deeply into that spirit of love, which warms his heart with kindness towards every conscientious Christian, who on some points thinks differently. His attachment is definite, but his charity knows no limits.

He observes that the loudest clamour for the Establishment is not always raised by the most pious, nor the most affectionate of her disciples; he therefore does not rejoice when he sees her honoured name hoisted as a political signal by those, who are careless of her spiritual prosperity; and he sometimes finds no inconsiderable difference between those who toast her, and those who study to promote her best interests; though the former obtain the reputation, which the others are only solicitous to deserve. He evinces his own affection by his zeal in defending her cause when attacked, by his prudence in never causelessly provoking the attack. Anxious that the walls of the sacred temple should be impregnable, he is still more anxious that the fires of her altars should burn with undecaying brightness; and that while her guardians are properly watching over the security of the one, the flame of the other be not extinguished. He gives the most unequivocal proof that he attends faithfully to her doctrines, by never separating them from her precepts, while he endeavours to incorporate both into his practice; adorning them by his example, recommending them in his writings, and illustrating them in his conversation.

If he produce little sensation among the intemperate, who exhibit their fidelity to the church by always representing her as on the very verge of destruction; yet he would, were the danger present, go greater lengths in her defence than some of her more declamatory champions; nay he does more now to avert her ruin, and they who seem to make her safety depend on their clamour. If he is not perpetually predicting open war, he is watchful against the hollow security of a false peace. The most difficult but not the least important part of his care, is not more to vindicate her against avowed enemies, than against friends at once vociferous and supine.

Candidus, though a good lover, is a bad hater, and it is this defect of hatred, which with a certain class, brings his love into suspicion. He has observed some who evince their attachment by their virulence against what they disapprove, rather than by cultivating, in support of what is right, that spirit which is 'first pure, then peaceable,' and which, if it be not peaceable, is not pure.—These are more remarkable for their dread of external evils, than their solicitude for the promotion of internal piety. Their religion consists rather in repulsion than attraction. On the other hand, it must be observed, that Candidus has none of that pliancy which, in this relaxed age, obtains in a different quarter, the praise of liberality from those who, thinking one religion about as good as another, are of course tolerant of any, because indifferent to all.

He has learned from the errors of two opposite parties, that fanaticism teaches men to despise religion, and bigotry to hate it. He knows that his candour is esteemed laxity by the prejudiced, and his firmness intolerance by the irreligious. There is, however, no ambiguity in his moderation; and he never, for the sake of popularity with either party, leaves it doubtful on what ground he takes his stand. Nor does he ever renounce a right principle, because one party abuses it, or another denies its existence; and while he deprecates the assumption of *names* by impostors, it does not alter his opinion of the *things* they originally signified; for instance, he does not think patriotism is a romance, nor disinterestedness a chimera, nor fervent piety a delusion, nor charity unorthodox; nor a saint necessarily a hypocrite.

He observes among his acquaintance, that there are some who sedulously endeavour to fix the brand of fanaticism on certain doctrines, which both the Bible and the Church not only recognize, but consider as fundamental, as the key-stone of the sacred arch on the strength of which our whole superstructure rests. These

doctrines, while they eject them from their own creed, they confound, in the creed of others, with certain dangerous opinions with which they are by no means necessarily connected, though they uniformly charge those who adopt the one class with invariably maintaining the other. It is in vain that the persons so charged disavow the opinions; it is to no purpose that they only desire to be allowed to know what they hold, and what they reject.

Candidus, however, undaunted by clamour, and unmoved by insinuation, tenaciously maintains the doctrine of human apostacy, of salvation by grace through faith, and of the influence of the Holy Spirit in renovating the heart. In her avowal of man's corruption, he insists that the church of England is most emphatical. 'Read,' said he one day, in earnest conversation with one whom he could scarcely consider but as a virtual Socinian within the pale of the Establishment, 'read the pointed and explicit confession with which her service opens.'—He holds the same language with some others to whom the Church is a higher authority than the Bible, in regard to a subject next in connexion with that of human weakness, namely, the agency of the Divine Spirit; he remarks that both these doctrines are recognized in every prayer and in every office; that they are especially acknowledged in the *Collects*, those brief but beautiful effusions of devotion, which, for strength of expression, condensation of the sense, and neatness of composition, not only surpass every thing in the age in which they were composed, but remain unrivalled in the similar addresses of our own time, whose best praise it is, that, in this period of fine writing, our petitionary forms are accounted more or less excellent, as they approach nearer, or recede farther from, these models. Read their self-abasing acknowledgments —'Thou, God, who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do'—'O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee'—'Because the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fall'—'Grant that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without Thee, may, by Thee, be enabled to live according to thy will'—'Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy holy Spirit'—'Because, through the weakness of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace.'

But there would be no end of enumeration. The same doctrines run through, and are incorporated with, the whole Liturgy. To get rid of them more omissions would be altogether insufficient, we must tear up the whole web, we must weave another, we must weave it too with new materials; for the old threads would retain the colour of the old doctrines, and communicate the original character to the new piece; it is not only the old form that must be new cast, but new principles that must be infused, a new train of sentiments that must be adopted, in short a new religion that must be substituted.

Candidus observes, that it is a proof how different the views of some of our contemporaries are on this subject from those of the primitive church, that while, with some of the former, divine influence is a theme of derision rather than of reverence; in the other, whatever was pure and holy, was ascribed to its operation. At the same time, being a diligent reader of ecclesiastical history, as well as an accurate observer of what passes before his eyes, he is aware what abuses have been and are still practised, and what deceits carried on, under pretence of being *the work of the Spirit*. The importance of the doctrine accounts for the imitations and counterfeits to which it is exposed; and he knows that the abuse of a thing is always pernicious in proportion to its excellence. The Old and New Testament abound with instances. To those of the former St. Peter reverts to guard his converts from those of the latter—'There were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you.' Another Apostle warns his hearers against the mischiefs which he himself had seen produced by these impious pretenders, by instructing them to 'try the spirits, whether they be of God.' Hence Candidus advises, with an able divine,* to try the spirits ourselves, not by putting them upon supernatural work, but to try them by a more infallible rule—by the doctrine they teach, that is, by its invariable conformity with Scripture. He thinks the same rule and the same necessity subsist now, in as full force, as when the injunction was given.

Candidus is aware that it is necessary, not only to be accurate in the use of his own terms, but to be on his guard against being misled by the inaccuracy of the terms employed by others. He therefore takes care to ascertain the character and temper of the man by whom any ambiguous term is used, as well as of him to whom the term is applied; without this caution he could not decide on the justness of the application. Even the founder of the Epicurean sect could say, *a man cannot live happily without living wisely*. Now, though every man, whatever be his principles, must assent to this truth as a general proposition, yet the phrase, 'living wisely,' conveyed a very different idea in the school of an atheistical philosopher, to what it would have conveyed in the follower of Zeno, and more especially in the disciple of Christ. Enthusiasm is one of these ambiguous terms.

Candidus is prudent on a principle which is sometimes denied. He considers that prudence is, in an ardent character, more likely to be an effect of grace than even zeal; because in the exercise of zeal he is indulging his natural temper, whereas, in the other case he is subduing it; and he has found that to resist a propensity is generally more the effect of principle than to gratify it.—Hence, he infers that if resistance be a work of grace, the sluggish and the cold hearted may judge of their own conquest over nature by a superinduced zeal, while he presumes *he* is conquering his own vehemence by a superinduced prudence; thus the same truth is illustrated by directly opposite instances.

Against enthusiasm, therefore, it is unnecessary to caution the discreet and enlightened Candidus. He avoids it as naturally as a wise man avoids folly, as a sober man shuns extravagance. But then it is the thing itself, and not

* Dr. Owen

what bigots call so; it is the real entity, and not the spectre, against which he is on his guard; for not being superstitious, he is not terrified by phantoms and goblins. He laments when he encounters a real enthusiast, because he knows that, even if honest, he is pernicious. But though he thinks him highly blameable, he does not think him worse 'than murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers.' He thinks enthusiasm mischievous, but he does not think it worse than impiety, worse than intemperance, worse than infidelity, worse than intolerance, worse than any other flagitious vice; especially he does not think it worse than all the other vices put together. Yet this he might be almost tempted to believe was the case, when he sees other vices comparatively left to enjoy themselves, and this doughty enormity, imaginary as well as real, singly attacked with the combined force of all the weapons which ought to be in turn applied to the whole family of sin. As he is very skilful in symptoms, he takes care to ascertain evident marks of the mania, palpable diagnostics of the rabid bite, before he pronounces on the disease, or proceeds to secure himself from the contagion.

By his well-exercised judgment, he can generally discover the different causes of the actual distemper. He can distinguish whether the patient is sick of a deluded imagination, or from having been in contact with the infected; whether he is mismanaged by artful, or injured by ignorant prescribers; whether the malady lies in the weakness of his natural powers, the agitation of his animal spirits, or the vanity of his mind—whether it be an inflammation on the brain, or a tumour in the heart—some or all of these appearances commonly indicating the fanatical fever. In either case he heartily subscribes to the reality and danger of the distemper, but even then he does not positively pronounce that the weak are wicked, or the disordered counterfeits.

But if, as is not seldom the case, he finds the appellation conferred only because the objects of it are deeply sensible of the unspeakable importance of religion, and the infinite value of eternal things—because they are no more afraid of feeling than of understanding the great truths of Christianity—because they think their souls are not a property to be complimented away through fear: if he find, that with all their warmth they are rational, with all their zeal they are humble, with all their energy they are consistent, with all their spirituality they are sober; if they obey the precepts of the Gospel as faithfully as they believe its doctrines—if their religion do not lie more in profession than in performance—if they give a striking evidence of their love of God, by their tenderness to their fellow-creatures—if they are as liberal to their bodily wants, as those are, who forget to take their souls into the account—if their piety appear as much in their practice as in their discourse, and their prudence keep pace with their earnestness, then he will not be forward to impute to them, as the unpardonable sin, those animated sentiments which are to themselves 'peace and joy in believing,' and to others benignity, philanthropy, and kindness.

And as he does not call well-directed zeal fanaticism, nor generous ardour delirium, so he does not rank those who believe in the omnipotence of divine grace among the enemies to virtuous action, nor does he suspect that the advocates for strenuous exertion are sworn foes to faith. Nor does he ever disavow a doctrine which he has adopted on conviction, because it may happen to be associated in the mind of another man, with other doctrines which he himself cannot adopt. And as he knows something of the internal constitution of the human heart and the nature of religious affections, he distinguishes between the sanguine temper of youth, between that warmth, which, in a rightly turned mind, time will cool, and experience temper, and which will retain no more than a due degree of spirit, when its first effervescence has subsided; he distinguishes this spirit from that blind zeal and headlong violence, which, as they are a part of no religion, so they are a discredit to any.

He has observed, that the reason why we see such misshapen representations of religion set up for the finger of reproach or ridicule to point at, is, that the reviler has not been looking out for truth; he has not taken his draught, we will not say from the highest model, but from the fair average of serious Christians; but he has taken it from the lowest specimen of what he has seen, and even more commonly from the distorted report of others. He was looking out for absurdity, and where it is studiously sought, it will not be difficult to find; and, if not found, it will be easily imagined. This caricature he produces as the representative of the whole body; taking care, however, to preserve in his portrait just resemblance enough to show a feature or two of the real face, that the disgusting and exaggerated physiognomy may not prevent its being recognized. If no glimpse of likeness could be traced, it would not answer the end; it would answer it still less, if the prevailing character of the piece were not deformity.

Candidus is persuaded that, of every combination of wickedness with folly which Satan has devised, hypocrisy is the greatest, as being the most generally unprofitable. The hypocrite is sure of being the abhorrence of both sides of the question. Where his duplicity is not suspected, the world hates him for the *appearance* of piety; God, who knows the heart, hates him for the abuse and affectation of it. But, though Candidus deprecates hypocrisy, he is cautious of suspecting it on light grounds, still more of charging it home without proof. As he is not omniscient, he cannot be quite sure that any man who appears more than usually pious is a hypocrite, nor does he so denominate him on that single ground. As he cannot scrutinize his heart, he judges him by his actions, and leaves him to settle his motive with his Maker.

On the whole, if he meet with a man, the consistency of whose life gives stronger evidence of the reality and depth of his religion, than other men, he is reluctant in suspecting him either of hypocrisy or enthusiasm. So far from it, he will find his own faith strengthened, his own victory over the world confirmed, his own indifference to human applause increased, by

such a living exemplification of the truth of Christianity, and calmly leave it to the inconsiderate, the incompetent, and the malevolent, to stigmatize the character which he reveres.

They who, when they observe eminent piety and zeal much above low water-mark, insinuate that such symptoms in the more animated Christian prove his tendency to be a separatist, pay a very wretched compliment to the established church. Is it not implying, that her service is not sufficiently high and enlarged to satisfy an energetic spirit; that she does not possess attractions to engage, and materials to fill, and spirit to warm a devout mind, but that a superior degree of earnestness will be in danger of driving its possessor to stray without her pale in search of richer pastures? Is it not virtually saying one of two things, either that a fervent piety is bad, or that the church is not good.

With Candidus, this is so far from being the case, he is so little 'given to change,' that he rejoices in belonging to a church of whose formularies we have already seen how much he had to say in commendation. In these standards he rejoices to see truth, as it were, pinned down, hedged in, and as far as is possible, in this mutable world, preserved and perpetuated. Her significant and spiritual ordinances, and the large infusion of Scripture in her offices and Liturgy, secure her from the fluctuations of human opinion; so that, if ever the principles of any of her ministers should degenerate, her service would be protected from the vicissitude. No sentiments but those of her prescribed ritual can ever find their way into the desk, and the desk will always be a safe and permanent standard for the pulpit itself, as well as a test by which others may ascertain its purity.

He values her government for the same reason for which he values her Liturgy, because it gives a definite bound to the inclosure, never forgetting that the fruit inclosed is of deeper importance than the fence which incloses. He always remembers, however, that, at no very remote period, when the hedge was broken down, disorder and misrule overspread the fair vineyard.

Among other doctrines, he is an accurate studier of the doctrine of proportions, in whatever regards the ecclesiastical institutions. Though he cordially approves her form and discipline, though he believes they are not only essential to her dignity, but necessary to her existence, yet he discriminates between what is subordinate and what is supreme. If the one is the body, the other is the soul. It is to her strenuously maintaining the doctrines of the New Testament, that he looks for her preservation. This is her Palladium. Nor does it more resemble the fabled statue of Ilium, because, like that, it fell from heaven to earth, than in its having dropped down *while the Prince was building the citadel.*

If he adopt the Liturgy for his model, it is because he perceives how completely she has adopted the Bible for hers, in never giving undue prominence to one doctrine to the disparagement of the rest; like *her* he appreciates and settles them according to their due degrees of importance.

Among his many reasons for venerating the church of England, the principal is that she is an integral and distinguished portion of the Church of Christ. In the specific he never loses sight of the generick character; as a Churchman, he is first a Christian and a Protestant. The ramification, so far from separating him from the root, unites him more closely to it. If he bear much fruit, it is because he is inserted into the true vine. Though quicksighted to what he conceives to be the errors, he does liberal justice to whatever is valuable in other communities. In many members of those which differ from his own, more in forms of government than in any of the essentials of doctrine, he sees powerful ability and sound learning to admire, and much substantial piety to venerate. Even with regard to that church, from the corruptions and spiritual tyranny of which our own has been providentially rescued, he acknowledges much excellence in those missals from which our own ritual was partly extracted; he sees in many of her writers a genius, a sublimity, and an unction that rarely have been surpassed. In short, he exercises charity and kindness to all sects and all parties, except one, a sect which has lately been well animadverted on. It is not, indeed, a distinct sect; it is not a separate community, for then his prudence might escape all contact with it, but it is one, whose sloth, producing the same insinuating effect which the subtlety of the Jesuits formerly produced, wihout giving us, like the school Loyola, any hope of its extinction, has found means to thrust not a few of its followers into every religious denomination and society in the world—the sect of the *non-doers.*

In these worst of sectaries, no taunting profession of faith, no flaming display of orthodoxy, no clamour for favourite, no hostility against reprobated doctrines, no outcry for or against the church or the state, will ever raise them in his estimation. He accounts them the barren fig-tree of every community in whose soil they spring up. They may, indeed, claim to belong to it, but it is as the worm belongs to the root, the canker to the bud, the excrescence to the healthful body.

In the constitution of the established church, Candidus approves the degrees of rank and dignity, and the gradations of income. But, if he never entertains a desire that the highest were lower, he cannot help breathing a cordial wish that the lowest were higher. Convinced, however, that every thing human is in its very nature imperfect, he consoles himself with the hope, a hope which is confirmed by actual instances, that some of the most highly endowed will be examples of christian liberality, and some of the most lowly, of patient submission; so that their several portions may, while they enable them to furnish a pattern to others, minister to their own eternal good.

But evils which he cannot remove, he will never aggravate. He holds it criminal even to agitate questions which only fester and inflame the wounds they are meant to cure; he knows that fruitless discussion may irritate, but seldom heals; that querelous animadversions on irremediable grievances only serve,

by stirring up discontent, to excite insubordination.

He suspects every order and degree among them for the Lord's sake; and, if a case should occur in which he cannot honour the man, he will honour his office. If called on for his opinion as to any defect, his censures are discreet; if not called upon, he is silent. But if his censures, when just, are temperate; his commendations, when merited, are cordial. Above all, he holds the practice to be equally dishonest, disingenuous and vulgar, to make communities and bodies answerable for the faults and errors of individuals; while he never commends or vindicates any thing decidedly wrong, either in individuals or in communities.

CHAP. XXVI.

The established Christian.

We have it on the authority of a fine writer, that, *not to know what occurred before we were born, is to be always a child.* Yet while the intellect may be improved to the highest pitch by this antecedent knowledge, the will and the passions may, notwithstanding our study of the most elaborate discussions on their nature and effects, remain in the same state of childish imbecility. History and philosophy, though they inform the understanding, and assist the judgment, cannot rectify the obliquities of the heart.

The experience of all past ages has produced such an accumulated mass of disappointment, such a long unbroken series of mortification, such a reiterated conviction of the emptiness of this world, and of the insufficiency of its power to confer happiness, that one would be ready to imagine, that to every fresh generation, nay to every period of the life of every individual in every generation, wisdom would not have all her admonitions to begin over again. One would not think that the same truths require, not only to be afresh pressed upon us, but to be again unfolded; to be repeated as if all previous experiment had never been tried, as if all foregoing admonition had either never been given, or had been completely obliterated; as if the world were about to begin on a fresh stock of materials, to set out on an untried set of principles, as if it were about to enter on an original course of action of which preceding ages had left no precedent; on a line of conduct of which our forefathers had bequeathed no instances of failure, had experienced no defeat of expectation.

We read perpetually of multitudes, who lived in the long indulgence of unbounded appetite, who in the gratification of every desire, has drained the world to its last dregs; but does the narrative of ages record a single instance, that the end proposed and followed up in the fervent pursuit, I mean happiness, was ever attained? We contemplate these recorded examples, we lament the disgusts, and pity the mortifications of the disappointed; but who applies the knowledge to any practical use, to any personal purpose. We are informed, but we are not instructed. We resolve, in full confidence of our own wisdom, and complete contempt for that of our predecessors, to make the experiment for ourselves. We, too, pursue the same end, and probably by the same path; secure that we shall escape the mistakes into which others have fallen, assured that we shall avoid the evils which they have incurred, evils which we attribute to their ignorance, or their neglect, to their error, or their indiscretion.

We set out fresh adventurers in the old tract. We weary our wits, we waste our fortune, we exhaust our spirits. Still we are persuaded that we have devised the expedient of which our precursors were ignorant; that we have hit on the very discovery which had eluded their search; that we have found the ingredient, which they, in mixing up the grand compound, earthly happiness, had overlooked.

The natural and pressing object of our desire is present enjoyment; those, therefore, who gratify our wayward fancies, or remove from us any immediate inconvenience, are sure of our favour. On them we seize as instruments for promoting our schemes of gratification, forgetting that they have schemes of their own to promote; that they are equally looking to us for our instrumentality; and that, if they are making any undue sacrifices to us, it is but in order to the furtherance of those schemes. Such is mere worldly friendship. As the intellectual eye seldom runs along the whole train of consequences, which is the only true way of taking our measure of things, the same principle which attaches us to the friend who is humouring us, makes us murmur at the dispensations of Him who is correcting us, dispensations which, though painful at the moment, may, by a train of circumstances of which we know neither the design nor the process, be insuring to us future benefits. But having no clear perception of remote good, we have no very ardent desires after it. Our short sightedness concurs with our selfishness in making this false estimate.

Divine goodness, which we perhaps have hitherto withstood, at length when He who gives the grace gives the desire, touches the heart so long closed against it. The still small voice which was drowned in the noise and tumult of the world is at length heard, and, through longer forbearance, and farther communications of that grace, is at length obeyed. Religion operating on the convictions of the heart, and our humility improving with the experience of our own mistakes, gradually remove the veil through which we had hitherto beheld the world.

As the heavenly light grows stronger, the false lights, drawn from the exhalations of sensuality and self-indulgence, which at once glimmer and mislead, are quenched. The day-star begins to dawn. In the clearer atmosphere, objects assume their proper shape; every thing appears in its true colours. The mind is insensibly disenchanted, the views take another turn. As the eye attains a more distinct sight, the desires acquire a juster aim. We discover that the best things on earth have an inseparable imperfection appended to them. Referring to our past experience, or present clearer observation of things, we find that the delights which we

fancied were indefectible are dying away; we find that pleasure dissolves, wit misleads, riches corrupt, power intoxicates, hope deceives, possession disappoints;—and, which now stamps upon our renewed feelings the deepest impression of the vanity of human things, difficulties sink our spirits, success agitates them; we find that what we want, we desire with a painful ardency; what we have, we either fear to enjoy, or the enjoyment is poisoned by the fear of losing it; and the intense delight could not long be borne, even if it could be obtained. The convictions of the Christian being settled, he is now desirous of imparting the benefits of his own experience to his younger friends, who, in their turn, commonly reject the transfer, thinking him to be as much mistaken as he had formerly thought his predecessors; like him, they prefer the experiment to the advice, the risk to the caution.

The sober thinker is now convinced, that between the fever of desire, the uncertainty of attainment, the disappointment attending what is attained, the alternation of hope and fear, the dread of the worst things, and the insuppressible sense of the brevity of the best, the mere man of the world can never be substantially happy. The Christian thus warned, thus wakened, is thankful, not for the mistakes he has committed, but for the salutary vexations that have attended them. The monitory wisdom of past ages rises in his esteem, in the same proportion as his own sinks. Above all, he has found, that there is no infallible wisdom but in the oracles of inspiration; there he looks for whatever is 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' There only he has found, that the 'man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'

In perusing the sacred records, he even derives consolation from what he has been, a source of derision to the profane, and of wonder to the ignorant—the fidelity with which the inspired writers have exhibited holy men, in the most censurable instances of their conduct, and in the lowest stages of their hope and confidence. He there beholds the chosen servants of God wading through doubts and apprehensions, assaulted by temptations, perplexed by trials. Had they never been presented but in their happier seasons, but in their triumphs, and their victories, the comparison with his own failures, with his own occasional depressions and fluctuations, would have sunk his spirits which they now support, would have weakened his faith which they now confirm.

He rejoices in the Gospel as a stream flowing from the fountain of love and mercy, the spring of all spiritual life and motion; he finds that genuine Christianity differs from every other good, as spirit differs from matter. It establishes the foundation of happiness as well as goodness; and both, not on any supposed merit in the recipient, but on the free mercy and voluntary grace of God. While it exacts obedience to the divine law, it shows that the requisition cannot be complied with, but by divine assistance; what it commands, it bestows; if it requires the will, it confers the power.

In the retrospect of his past life, he is astonished at the patience and forbearance of God under his own repeated provocations; especially he reflects with wonder, that the very prosperity which had been the special gift of his Maker, had alienated his heart from him. He is humbled to think, that it was in the very arms of his goodness he forgot him; when he tasted most abundantly of his bounty, then it was he neglected him most; when he most largely enjoyed his overflowing beneficence, the gift induced not gratitude, but intoxication. He looks back with remorse on the time he has wasted, and the errors he has committed, but he does not spend his remaining strength so much in regretting as in repairing them.

To be enchanted with things which have not much in them, he now finds is the mark of a weak and undistinguished mind. It shows the absence of a rational understanding, and the want of a manly spirit, to be inordinately attached to any object, whose worth will not bear out our judgment, and vindicate our attachment. Habitual considerations on the littleness of present things, the disappointing nature of all earthly enjoyments, the grandeur of his future prospects, with nearer views of the eternal world, all combine to give continence to his mind, moderation to his desires, and sobriety to his conduct.

We are slow in making the discovery of the large capacity of the human mind; that it is made capable of a felicity commensurate to its nature; that the rudiments, both of eternal misery and happiness, are laid in our souls here. Being endued with such faculties and powers for seeking the favour of God, and such means and graces for attaining to his presence, the Christian finds that the misery must be proportionate in missing it. He has also learned, that it is not the design of the Gospel merely to announce to us a state of future blessedness, but to fit us for it. It is but half of the work of infinite love to provide a heaven for man; it is its completion to make man a suitable recipient of the bliss prepared for him. Without this gracious provision, Christianity had been a scheme to tantalize, and not to save us. He sees that there is a higher destination for the passions than that to which he has hitherto applied them. Those affections which had been parcelled out, and severally fastened on their respective vanities, are now concentrated and devoted to God. Love, joy, hope, desire, the very propensities which have formerly misled him, having found their true object, now ripen him for that state from which they had so long seduced him; each contributes its quota towards framing him into a disposition for happiness, and to prepare him for its ultimate enjoyment.

He has long since discovered that the best pleasures of earth are drawn from cisterns not fountains, that our most prized delights are neither pure in themselves, nor permanent in their duration. The immortal mind cannot be satisfied in the pursuit, nor even in the enjoyment. They cannot confer what they do not possess, perfection and stability. Things perishable themselves cannot satisfy the desires of being made for eternity. The soul cannot exert its full powers, nor unfold its whole nature, nor dis-

play all its operations on this contracted stage. 'The bed is narrower than that a man can stretch himself on it.' There is no proportion between such a scanty space and such large capabilities, such trivial pleasures and such boundless desires, such a fleeting duration and a spirit formed for immortality.

He has found that it is of pressing necessity that this futurity be a happy one, otherwise the very circumstance that it is endless, which makes the happiness complete, turns against us, and makes the consummation of our misery. It is difficult to say whether the shortness of the time allotted us to secure this futurity, or the eternity of the state to be secured, should most stimulate our religious exertions. We have frequently spoken of the duty of learning of an enemy, here the lesson is peculiarly awakening. The reason assigned in the vision of St. John why the *great* enemy is working with such powerful energy, is, because *the time is short*. Shall we be equally assured of the brevity of our own time, and yet be less active in securing our salvation, than he is in promoting our destruction.

The boundlessness of the divine perfections presents to the soul the widest range for the exercise of faith and love, and the Gospel teaches the most unshaken confidence of happiness in the death of Christ. But that God is the King *eternal and immortal*, is to us the broad basis on which all the rest of the promises are built. It would moderate the delight with which we consider his attributes, if eternity were not annexed to them; his immortality alone being the pledge and security of ours. 'The weight of glory' announced by the Apostle derives its highest value from its being an *eternal* weight.

Of the joys of heaven there is in Scripture no description. This is wisely avoided, as the tastes, desires, and inclinations of men are so different, one conceiving that to be of the very essence of happiness, for which another has little relish. They are intimated by negatives, or by shadows, figures, and images of things, to which a general idea of enjoyment is annexed. There is only one idea respecting heaven, which is clear, and plain, and definite—its *eternity*. Of duration every man has some precision in his ideas. Other delineations might have led to dispute; but if the different notions of the nature of happiness might have kindled debate; about its immortality, there can be but one opinion. Perpetuity gives the finishing stamp to perfection.

And as we frame our ideas of eternity from what we know of duration; so we frame our faint notions of God from what we conceive of goodness. We meditate on the excellences of the highest created spirits, and then imagine something of God, though inconceivably elevated above that poor conception, yet not contradictory to it. We fill our mind with the idea of wisdom, goodness, knowledge, power, holiness, justice, purity, and to each of these attributes we prefix that of infinite; never forgetting that God is almost as much above our excellences as our weaknesses. Yet we can but ascribe to Him all that we feel or can imagine of perfection, and we should be still more lost in the mere abstract notion, if we had not some sensible feelings, though infinitely imperfect, derived from reality and exemplification.

The Christian must fill his vocation to the last. In this or that profession men are looking forward to the period when they may lay it down with safety and honour: the Christian's safety and honour consist in his carrying it on to the end. But there is between them this point of agreement. The man of business contracts his schemes, diminishes his labours, mitigates his activity, all with a view to his ultimate repose. If the religious man act thus, he does it with another view, and to a higher end. If he seek rest from his toils, it is in order to find a surer rest in God; if he contract his schemes, it is that he may enlarge his views. There is no specific period in which he can say, My work is done, till he lies down in the grave, where no man can work. He now finds that the tranquillity of his occupations, the beauties of nature, the peaceful pleasures of retirement, pleasures the most natural and congenial to the mind of unsophisticated man, would still be too little to fill his desires; that they would leave a melancholy void in his heart, without the sense of *His* presence whose gift they are. While a consciousness both of the presence and favour of God gives a relish to every enjoyment, and heightens even common comforts into blessings.

There is a progression in the habits of a Christian. In the advancement of his course his pursuits are probably slower, but his interruptions are fewer. If his progress be even less obvious, less apparently active, he is perhaps more substantially improving, more spiritually advancing. When, from the infirmities of declining life, he may seem to be doing nothing, he may then be doing most. If he is able to look less abroad, he is looking more within. He begins to taste more of the fruits of that victory which the Apostle describes as the evidence of a renovated heart; to give this best proof that he is 'born of God,' 'he overcometh the world.' This, if one of his latest, is one of his most important conquests. But though he has turned away his eyes from the world, because it never satisfied the desires of his heart, he endeavours to the last to serve it with much more sedulity, than when he looked to it for happiness.

He has long been persuaded, that even in this present low state of being, we must attain something of the rudiments of future happiness. He has learned that the first principles must be formed now, which are to have their consummation in heaven. To look forward to the completion of a state and character, of which we have not so much as begun to acquire the elements, is not acting according to any of the analogies of common life. The beginning and the process of any thing we have in contemplation always partake in an inferior, but still in a similar and progressive measure, of the nature of the end. It has the same properties and tendencies, in its initial state, with that which is hereafter to be completed. We must begin to lay in our hearts the foundation both of the love and knowledge of God, if we would hereafter attain to that perfection in both, which

we are told is of the essence of the heavenly happiness.

He has long found that there is no peace to the mind that does not entertain some one ultimate end. Broken views and mixed designs distract its attention, and corrode its quiet. In most of the enterprises of life, a man, besides being absorbed by present and perhaps opposing schemes, is looking anxiously forward to some point of change. He had no sooner framed one project, but his views are penetrating to something beyond it; something which he shall have adopted as soon as he shall have accomplished all his proximate objects. Thus the projecting, and fluctuating, and prospective mind, is never at rest. There is no stability but in God. No grand aim, no fixed position, no ultimate end, but in him. He who has once chosen his Redeemer for his portion, is subject to no more vicissitudes; has no after reference, no remoter pursuit, no further design, in reserve.

He, however, who makes heaven his aim, and God his end, will not therefore live idly, as if his choice being decided, his object being settled, he had nothing more to do. His object is indeed fixed, his choice is irreversibly determined, his portion is unalterably decided; but that which elevates his desires also enlarges his capacities, so that his pursuit never ceases, his search is never finished; nor ever can be, unless the perfection of its object could be exhausted. Mr. Boyle observes of a certain mineral, that a man may consume his whole life in the study of it, without ever arriving at the knowledge of all its properties. How much more shall he who seeks to 'acquaint himself with God, find that his entire life is too short, his whole powers too small, to find out the Almighty to perfection! This he will never completely accomplish on earth, yet his desires will grow with his attainments.

But as the happiness of a Christian is chiefly in prospect, he joyfully looks forward to its glorious consummation in a better world. 'When I awake up after thy likeness I shall be satisfied,' a plain intimation that till then we shall not be satisfied. From different passages of scripture, we collect that the happiness of Heaven consists in seeing God, in participating his likeness, in being satisfied with it. But how shall this blessedness be perfected hereafter, if the desire, if the endeavour, does not originate here? If there be no preliminary acquaintance begun with him who ransomed us with his blood, can we expect to dwell with him in eternal glory? 'Not to know God' is the portentous omen of being 'punished with everlasting destruction from his presence.' It is unspeakably distressing to apprehend, that this may possibly be the awful description of some, who are by no means destitute of credit or character; who go on without ever entertaining a conception, that such a beginning may be connected with such an end.

All the delineations of future misery, all the pictures of a disturbed imagination, all the terrors with which a restless conscience anticipates its torments, all the accumulated images, by which Revelation describes it, whether under the figure of the fire that is never quenched, or the worm that never dies, are but inferior degrees of this terrible climax, 'everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord!' All the doleful conceptions of unimaginable woe, all the shades and shapes of substantial, unutterable wretchedness, are comprised in this hopeless, everduring exile. What the soul suffers, there is no attempt to describe, what it loses is but faintly presented to the imagination. On the other hand, 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath the heart of man conceived,' the final state of bliss. And it is observable that the two extremes are both most emphatically conveyed by negatives. We are only assured that assimilation with God is the perfection of joy, banishment from his presence the extremity of woe.

There is nothing that more humbles and abases the established Christian, than that, whilst in his happier moments, he is able to figure to himself a cheering image of the glory of the Redeemer, the blessedness of the redeemed, the beauty of Christian perfection; to feel himself not only awakened, but exalted, not merely enlightened, but kindled, almost possessing, rather than anticipating, heaven; while he is enabled, in a joyful measure, to meditate upon these things, feel his mind ennobled and his soul expanded by the contemplation, yet to find how soon the bright ideas fade, the strong impression is effaced, the heavenly vision vanished; he mourns to reflect, that he does not more powerfully exhibit in his conversation, more forcibly display in his life, that spirit of which his heart was lately so full, of which his mind was so enamoured. Cast down by these reflections, he still learns—painful lesson!—that 'those *must* sow in tears who would reap in joy;' that it is not expectation, but possession, which excludes all sense of sorrow; that it is heaven itself, and not the promise of it, that is to 'wipe all tears from our eyes.' His happiness in this life will, on these accounts, be as far below perfection, as his goodness; and when we speak of his joy and felicity, it must be understood, rather of a comparative, than an absolute happiness. It is the joy of hope rendered sure by faith. The soul will not be completely blessed till the body is disanimated, its temptations removed, and its infirmities at an end.

The Christian, as life wears away, must not be discouraged, if he feels not always those fervours, which once appeared to him inseparable from real piety. It is not, perhaps, that his piety is less sincere, but that years and infirmity, which have impaired his natural energy of character, may affect or seem to affect the liveliness of his devotion; but it may be mellowed, without being decayed; he will not too much distress himself by mistaking that for a diminution of grace, which may be only a wearing out of nature. Or it may be, that the principle, which is become habitual, may not for that very reason strike the mind so forcibly as on its more early adoption, yet it may have sunk deeper into his heart. There may be more *proportion* in his religion; all its component parts may be more balanced: there is more evenness in his character; more virtues, but of a less ostensible kind, are collected in-

it than he formerly thought necessary. His piety is at once more solid, and more spiritual, more operative, yet more serene. His principles have somewhat of a different call for their exercise: the efforts he formerly made to resist temptations of a bolder character, are now exerted to repel the incursions of peevishness, the allurements of indolence, the murmurs of impatience. Qualities which he once relinquished to the unconverted, as thinking them merely natural, he now carefully cherishes. Cheerfulness, once considered as the mere flow of animal spirits is cultivated as a Christian grace; for it does not now spring from nature, but triumphs over it.

He is not so eager in support of some particular opinions as formerly, because each doctrine now maintains its proper place and due importance in his mind. If he make religion less a subject of discussion, he trusts it is become a more practical principle. His views are more deep, his judgment more just, his convictions more firmly rooted. There is a finer edge to his virtues, for they are now sheathed in humility; and this quality, the crowning point, and soundest evidence of a renovated mind, by rendering him more distrustful of himself, more candid in his opinions, and more temperate in his language, will have checked that forwardness of debate, rashness of decision and impatience with error, which, with the less enlightened, might formerly have given him the appearance of a more animated Christian.

But the more his character improves, the more he looks out of himself for his final happiness. His trust in his Redeemer, increases in exact proportion to those virtues of which that trust is the source, virtues on which too many others invite him to rest his dependence.

Some Christians, in their outset, are disposed to lay an almost exclusive stress on duties, without sufficiently cultivating the spirit which should prompt them; others too much overlook duties, relying on certain fervors for supplying their place. The established Christian is careful never to relax in duties, even though they are not attended with that energy which once gave more animation to the exercise. There may be in them a less sensible acting of the affections, which are naturally more alive in the active season of life, yet without any diminution of the real principle of piety; there will be rather an increased devotedness, an augmented acquiescence of the will, a more complete consecration of heart and spirit, to the only legitimate object of their entire affection.

He will, however, be solicitous, that if the flame emit not such vivid flashes, as when it was first lighted, yet that it shall burn more steadily, more equably; especially will he be vigilant, that he do not insensibly transfer to other objects that ardour which used to give life and spirit to his piety, and that while he fears he is not so much alive to God, it is because he is more alive to the world. Though others cannot fairly judge of his internal state, yet there is this sure test by which he will judge himself; if the natural tempers be not more subdued, if the irrascible passions retain their vehemence, if pride and selfishness maintain their sway, while the religious feelings alone are grown obtuse, it is an alarming symptom, a plain intimation, that religion has indeed lost, or rather, it is to be feared, that it never had obtained the supreme place in his heart.

And as he has observed, that in some vehement characters the lamp of religious fervour was first kindled by the fire of natural passions, so its flame declines with the declension of the natural powers; he is also aware, that there is a possibility to the Christian, as he advances in years, of a growing supineness, the too natural effect of which is a decay of the vital spirit of religion. This makes him tremble when he reflects that the same awful warning which, in the vision of the Apocalypse, 'the Spirit gives to the churches,' is addressed with equal emphasis to every individual Christian. He remembers that this compassionate Spirit, which succours us when tempted, strengthens us when persecuted, intercedes for us when afflicted, has promised no such soothing tenderness under declining piety. His language to the decaying Christian, as well as to the lukewarm church, is that of alarming menace. This gradual apostacy is the only case, because it is a hopeless one, in which he threatens final rejection. It is, indeed, infinitely grievous, when they, whom this blessed Spirit has enlightened, in whom he has excited devout dispositions and holy tempers, visibly sink below the state in which they once stood. In the volume of inspiration, every complaint, every expostulation, every argument which long-suffering goodness could suggest, every intreaty which insulted mercy could devise, is exhausted; nothing is omitted which can invigorate relaxing principle, nothing is neglected which can reanimate decaying piety.

The advanced Christian, therefore, will guard against the too natural delusion of imposing on himself the belief, that a declension in spiritual vigour is only natural decay. But he will guard against it, by watching its sensible and visible effects. He will discern, whether he sets less value on the things which are passing away; whether his attachment to the world diminishes, while his prayers for its prosperity and improvement increase; whether he is as zealous in promoting good works by his purse and his influence, as he was in the days of health and strength, by his personal exertions.

The confirmed Christian exemplifies the emphatical description of the good man in Scripture, 'he *walks* with God.' He does not merely approach him at stated times; he does not ceremoniously address him on great occasions only, and then retreat, and dwell at a distance; but he *walks* with him, his habitual intercourse, his natural motion, his daily converse, his intimate communication, is with his Redeemer: and he remembers that walking not only implies intercourse, but progress. His graces if not more sincere, are more universal; he knows and he endeavours to act upon the knowledge, that a Christian must be holy in '*all manner* of conversation;' that excellences in some part of his character will not atone for allowed defects in any.

In the still remaining varieties of this changing scene, not knowing to what particular trials

he may yet be called, he will have endeavoured to bring a general preparedness of spirit to every event. When he can no longer *do* the will of God by his accustomed exertions, he can, with a submission which is worn into a habit, *suffer* it. That which is the crime of an ordinary man, is his highest attainment. *He can submit to be useless.* He will cheerfully resign himself to be discharged from services, in which his former happiness had consisted. He will contentedly see himself laid by, though still stout in heart, and firm in spirit. He will kindly assist those who are rising up to fill the place which he is about to leave vacant, by his counsel his experience, his prayers. He can rejoice, that though the servant fails, the service is and will be supplied.

He will continue more assiduously to labour after that consistency of character, which is a more unequivocal evidence of high christian attainment, than the most prominent great qualities, which are frequently counteracted by their opposites. This consistency exhibits a most striking conformity to the image of his Maker; as in the works of creation, the wisdom of the Supreme Intelligence is more admirable in the agreement and harmony of one thing with another, than in the individual beauty and excellence of each. It is more conspicuous, in the fitness and proportion of its parts relatively, than in the composition of the parts themselves. By this uniformity, the results of religion are the most beautifully exhibited in the christian character.

And as a real Christian is, allowing for human infirmity, consistent with himself; so the same consistency is discoverable in the general features of all Christians. However men may differ in their natural character, yet there is, in all true believers, a sort of correspondent feeling, as well as common principle, which draws their affections to each other, as well as their hearts and faculties to one common source and centre. It is not a traditionary religion which attracts them to the faith of their ancestors, nor is it a party feeling which attaches them to some particular society, but it is a divinely infused principle, communicated by the Spirit of God; it is identified in all its essentials; and a genuine Christian is radically the same being, wherever he is found, and under whatever difference of circumstances he exists.

The nearer he approaches to God, the more, in one sense, he will be sensible of his distance from him. Higher views of God's unspeakable holiness, a deeper sense of his own unworthiness, act reciprocally, and confirm each other. Yet this growing consciousness of his distance only serves to augment his love. He more and more feels the goodness of God, in having never cast off human nature, in having, immediately on its apostacy, conceived the gracious design to repair its evils, and restore its dignity. He feels, in its full force, that unspeakable consolation which the disciples of the most sublime of all the pagan philosophers lamented was wanting in their religion; they regretted that *between the pure divinity and the impure creature, as there is no union, so there can be no communion.* Can any thing more strikingly demonstrate how completely the Mediator provides for that want, and establishes that communion? 'It is thus,' as a very learned and pious writer has observed, 'that the Gospel doctrine gives full relief of mind and ease of conscience, as well as encouragement to piety, and discouragement to sin.'* It gives not only future hope, but present peace! it is not all in promise, it is much in hand.

Through the silent, but effectual, operations of grace, obedience, is become acquiescence, duty, is transformed, not only into assent, but choice. If even a heathen could say, Lead me to whatsoever I am appointed, and I will *follow thee, but if I am unwilling, still I will follow thee,* no wonder if the confirmed Christian serves God not so much because he is bound to serve him, as because love is the dictate of his heart, affection the voluntary bent of his disposition. He needs no extraneous attraction, the impulse is from within. The raw recruit requires to be allured by the 'fife and spirit-stirring drum,' but the veteran soldier follows the service because he loves it, follows it for its own sake. There is no longer any violence done to nature, for the nature is made conformable to the object; the love of Christ constrains him, contrary principles are reconciled, opposite propensities are blended into one, and that one a blessed, though still imperfect, conformity to the image and the will of God. The more his perceptions are cleared and his will purified, the more his faith strengthens; the more simple his views become, the more his thoughts and affections reduce themselves to that one central point, where alone perfection resides.

As he has long observed that the scheme, the show, the fashion of this life passes away, so he does not forget, that his own progress keeps pace with the world, that he also is passing away with it. Fluctuation, vicissitude and decay, form the very characters of our being. 'Nothing continueth in one stay.' Surely these perpetual intimations of Scripture were intended for a constant memento, that fondness for things so transitory is as ill-suited to their value as disproportioned to their duration. These constant admonitions inculcate temperance in our joy, and moderation in our sorrow. They teach us to rejoice as if we rejoiced not, and to weep as if we wept not. Whatever is vain in the end, renders all reference to its intermediate course comparatively vain also.

The Christian observes the world around him to be most careful about the things which will end at death; his care is chiefly confined to the things which then begin; and as it is not so much to ascertain the time, as to secure the consequences of death, that he has been anxious; death can never properly be said to be sudden to him, who always knew that the event was as certain as the period was uncertain. But he does not convert the shadows of death into such a thick and substantial cloud, as shall prevent the mental eye from piercing through it, and seeing the glory beyond it. Through this deep, but pervious gloom, the bright prospect opens to that state, a glimpse of which, caught by the eye of faith, has in all ages, enabled the sincere

* John Smith.

Christian to work through all his earthly difficulties: as it has strengthened him to encounter, with holy hope and humble confidence, the trials of life, so he trusts it will sustain him in his last conflict with the terrors of death. 'Let me now,' says he, 'act as seeing him who is invisible, borne up by the promises of the Gospel, and strengthened by the eternal Spirit, let me anticipate my heaven, burst my present narrow bounds, shake off the incumbrance of body, annihilate a distance in itself so short, and make that immortality which is near, present.'

Thus is the image of divine goodness more clearly though still imperfectly, reflected in the confirmed Christian. The original character of the human heart, as it came from the hands of its Creator, is about to be reinstated in its pristine purity. Sin, the lawless tenant, not the native proprietor of the mansion, will soon be totally expelled; in the mean time, the primitive principle is radicated; the usurper is dethroned, if not altogether dispossessed; he is conquered, if not absolutely expelled; if he sometimes disturb, he can no longer destroy. The exile returns to his forsaken home, the prodigal to his father's house, the pardoned penitent to his God.

AN ESSAY

ON THE CHARACTER AND PRACTICAL WRITINGS OF

SAINT PAUL.

Saint Paul hath furnished us with so rich a variety of moral and spiritual precepts, subordinate to the general laws of piety and virtue, that out of them might well be compiled a body of Ethics, or system of precepts *de officiis*, in truth and completeness far excelling those which any philosophy hath been able to devise or deliver.—Dr. Barrow.

PREFACE.

It is with no little diffidence that the writer of the following pages ventures to submit them to the public eye. She comes 'in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling.' She is fully aware, that whoever pretends to institute an inquiry into the character, and especially into the writings, of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in a manner at all adequate to the dignity and excellence of both, should possess many and high requisites, to which she can make out no fair title. It would, however, be entirely superfluous to insist on her incompetency to the proper execution of such a work, on her deficiencies in ancient learning, Biblical criticism, and deep theological knowledge; because the sagacity of the reader would not fail to be beforehand with her avowal, in detecting them. It may, however, serve as some apology for the boldness of the present undertaking, that these volumes are not of a critical, but of a practical nature.

On the doctrinal portion, more especially, of Saint Paul's Epistles, such a multitude of admirable discourses have been composed, that to have attempted to add to their number, without reaching their excellence, would have been as unnecessary as it might have been presumptuous. On the practical part, also, much has been ably and usefully written. Dissertations, commentaries, treatises, and sermons, however, though of superior merit, have not worn out the subject; and elucidations of his writings, whether they relate to doctrine or to practice, cannot, in any point of view, be undertaken without exhibiting new proofs of those inestimable treasures they contain. They are a golden mine, in which the diligent workman, the deeper he digs, the more he will discover; the farther he examines, the more he will find. Rich veins, hitherto unheeded, will overpay his labours, will continue to pour out upon him their fresh abundance of precious ore. Even the present explorer, who had no skill to penetrate his depths, has been sometimes surprised at the opulence which lay upon the surface, and of which she had not before, perhaps, fully estimated the value.

There are, it is true, passages in the works of this great Apostle, (but they are of rare occurrence, and bear no proportion to such as are obvious,) which have been interpreted in a different and even contradictory manner by men, who, agreeing in the grand essentials of Christianity, may be allowed to differ on a few abstruse points, without any impeachment of the piety on either side. If one must be mistaken, both may be sincere. If either be wrong, both doubtless desire to be right; and, happily for mankind, we shall all be ultimately tried by a Judge, who is a searcher of the thoughts and intents of the *heart;* in whose sight the reciprocal exercise of Christian charity may be more acceptable than that entire uniformity of sentiment which would supersede the occasion of its exercise. 'What I know not, teach Thou me,' is a petition which even the wisest are not too wise to offer; and they who have prefered it with the most effect, are, of all others, the persons who will judge the most tenderly of the different views, or unintentional misconceptions of the opposite party.

That conquest in debate over a Christian adversary, which is achieved at the expense of the Christian temper, will always be dearly purchased; and, though a triumph so obtained may discomfit the opponent, it will afford no moral triumph to the conqueror.

Waving, therefore, both from disinclination, and inability, whatever passages may be consider

ed as controversial, the writer has confined herself to endeavour, though it must be confessed, imperfectly and superficially, to bring forward St. Paul's character as a model for our general imitation, and his practical writings as a store-house for our general instruction; avoiding whatever might be considered as a ground for the discussion of any point not immediately tending to practical utility.

It may be objected to her plan, that it is not reasonable to propose for general imitation, a character so highly gifted, so peculiarly circumstanced,—an inspired Apostle,—a devoted Martyr. But it is the principal design of these pages,—a design which it may be thought is too frequently avowed in them,—to show that our common actions are to be performed, and our common trials sustained, in somewhat of the same spirit and temper with those high duties and those unparalleled sufferings to which Saint Paul was called out; and that every Christian in his measure and degree, should exhibit somewhat of the dispositions inculcated by that religion, of which the Apostle Paul was the brightest human example, as well as the most illustrious human teacher.

The writer is persuaded, that many read the Epistles of Saint Paul with deep reverence for the station they hold in the Inspired Oracles, without considering that they are at the same time supremely excellent for their unequalled applicableness to life and manners; that many, while they highly respect the writer, think him too high for ordinary use. It has, therefore, been her particular object, in the present work, not indeed to diminish the dignity of the Apostle, but to diminish, in one sense, the distance at which we are apt to hold so exalted a model; to draw him into a more intimate connection with ourselves; to let him down, as it were, not to our level, but to our familiarity. To induce us to resort to him, not only on the great demands and trying occurrences of life, but to bring both the writings and the conduct of this distinguished Saint to mix with our common concerns; to incorporate the doctrines which he teaches, the principles which he exhibits, and the precepts which he enjoins, into our ordinary habits, into our every day practice; to consider him not only as the writer who has the most ably and successfully unfolded the sublime truths of our Divine religion, and as the instructor who has supplied us with the noblest system of the higher ethics, but who has even condescended to extend his code to the more minute exigences and relations of familiar life.

It will, perhaps, be objected to the writer of these pages, that she has shown too little method in her distribution of the parts of her subject, and too little system in her arrangement of the whole; that she has expatiated too largely on some points, passed over others too slightly, and left many unnoticed; that she has exhibited no history of the life, and observed no regular order in her reference to the actions of the Apostle. She can return no answer to these anticipated charges, but that, as she never aspired to the dignity of an expositor, so she never meant to enter into the details of the biographer.

Formed, as they are, upon the most extensive views of the nature of man, it is no wonder that the writings of St. Paul have been read with the same degree of interest, by Christians of every name, age, and nation. The principles they contain are, in good truth, absolute and universal: and whilst this circumstance renders them of general obligation, it enables us, even in the remotest generation, to judge of the skilfulness of his addresses to the understanding, and to feel the aptitude of his appeals to the heart.

To the candour of the reader,—a candour which, though perhaps she has too frequently tried, and too long solicited, she has, however, never yet failed to experience,—she commits this little work. If it should set one human being on the consideration of objects hitherto neglected, she will account that single circumstance, success;—nay, she will be reconciled even to failure, if that failure should stimulate some more enlightened mind, some more powerful pen, to supply, in a future work on the same subject, the deficiencies of which she has been guilty; to rectify the errors which she may have committed; to rescue the cause which she may have injured.

Barley-Wood, January 20, 1815.

AN ESSAY

ON THE CHARACTER AND PRACTICAL WRITINGS OF

SAINT PAUL.

CHAP. I.

Introductory remarks on the morality of Paganism, showing the necessity of the Christian Revelation.

The morality of a people necessarily partakes of the nature of their theology; and in proportion as it is founded on the knowledge of the true God, in such proportion it tends to improve the conduct of man. The meanest Christian believer has here an advantage over the most enlightened heathen philosopher; for what he knows of the nature of God, arising chiefly from what he knows of Christ, and entirely from what is revealed in Scripture, he gains from those divine sources more clear and distinct views of the Deity, than unassisted reason could ever attain; and of consequence, more correct ideas of what is required of himself, both with respect to God and man. His ideas may be mean in their expression, compared with the splendid language of the sages of antiquity; but the cause of the superiority of his conceptions is ob-

While they 'go about to establish their own wisdom,' he submits to the wisdom of God, as he finds it in his word. What inadequate views must the wisest pagans, though 'they felt after him,' have entertained of Deity, who could at best only contemplate him in his attributes of power and beneficence, whilst their highest unassisted flights could never reach the remotest conception of that incomprehensible blessing, the union of his justice and his mercy in the redemption of the world by his Son—a blessing familiar and intelligible to the most illiterate Christian.

The religion of the heathens was so deplorably bad in its principle, that it is no wonder their practice was proportionably corrupt. 'Those just measures of right and wrong,' says Locke, 'which necessity had introduced, which the civil laws prescribed, or philosophy recommended *stood not on their true foundation.*' They served indeed to tie society together, and by these bands and ligaments promoted order and convenience: but there was no divine command to make them respected, and there will naturally be little reverence for a law, where the legislator is not reverenced, much less where he is not recognized. There will also be little obedience to a law without sanctions where neither penalty is feared, nor reward expected.

Previous to the establishment of Christianity, philosophy had attained to its utmost perfection, and had shown how low was its highest standard. It had completely betrayed its inability to effect a revolution in the minds of men. 'Human reason,' says the same great authority above quoted, 'never yet, from unquestionable principles or clear deductions, made out an entire body of the law of nature. If a collection could be made of all the moral precepts in the pagan world, many of which may be found in the Christian religion, that would not at all hinder, but that the world still stood as much in need of our Saviour, and of the morality he taught.' The law of the New Testament recommends itself to our regard by its excellence, and to our obedience by the authority of the Lawgiver. Christianity, therefore, presents not only the highest perfections, but the surest standard of morals.

In a multitude of the noble sentences and beautiful aphorisms of many of the heathen writers, there was indeed a strong tone of morality. But these fine sentiments, not flowing from any perennial source, had seldom any powerful effect on conduct. Our great poet has noticed this discordance between principle and practice in his dialogue between two great and virtuous Romans.—Cassius, who disbelieved a future state, reproves Brutus for the inconsistency between his desponding temper and the doctrines of his own Stoic school:

> You make no use of your philosophy,
> If you give way to accidental evils.

Many of their works, in almost every species of literature, exhibit such perfection as to stretch the capacity of the reader, while they kindle his admiration, and invest with no inconsiderable reputation, him who is able to seize their meaning, and to taste their beauties; so that an able critic of their writings almost ranks with him who excels in original composition. In like manner the lives of their great men abound in splendid sayings, as well as heroic virtues, to such a degree as to exalt our idea of the human intellect, and, in single instances, of the human character. We say, in single instances, for their idea of a perfect character wanted consistency, wanted completeness. It had many constituent parts, but there was no *whole* which comprised them. The moral fractions made up no integral. The virtuous man thought it no derogation from his virtue to be selfish, the conqueror to be revengeful, the philosopher to be arrogant, the injured to be unforgiving: forbearance was cowardice, humility was baseness, meekness was pusillanimity. Not only their justice was stained with cruelty, but the most cruel acts of injustice were the road to popularity which immortalized the perpetrator.—The good man was his own centre. Their virtues wanted to be drawn out of themselves, and this could not be the case. As their goodness did not arise from any knowledge, so it could not spring from any imitation of the Divine perfections. That inspiring principle, the love of God, the vital spark of all religion, was a motive of which they had not so much as heard; and if they had, it was a feeling which it would have been impossible for them to cherish, since some of the best of their deities were as bad as the worst of themselves.

When the history of their own religion contained little more than the quarrels and the intrigues of these deities, could we expect that the practice of the people would be much better, or more consistent than their belief? If the divinities were at once holy and profligate, shall we wonder if the adoration was at once devout and impure? The worshipper could not commit a crime but he might vindicate it by the example of some deity; he could not gratify a single appetite of which his religion did not furnish a justification.

Besides this, all their scattered documents of virtue could never make up a body of morals. They wanted a connecting tie.—The doctrines of one school were at variance with those of another. Even if they could have clubbed their opinions and picked out the best from each sect, so as to have patched up a code, still the disciples of one sect would not have submitted to the leader of another; the system would have wanted a head, or the head would have wanted authority, and the code would have wanted sanctions.

And as there was no governing system, so there was no universal rule of morals, for morality was different in different places.—In some countries people thought it no more a crime to expose their own children than in others to adopt those of their neighbour.—The Persians were not looked upon as the worst moralists for marrying their mothers, nor the Hyrcanians for not marrying at all, nor the Sogdians for murdering their parents, nor the Scythians for eating their dead.*

The best writers seldom made use of argu-

* Plutarch relates, that Alexander, after conquering these countries, had reformed some of their evil habits.

ments drawn from future blessedness to inforce their moral instruction. Excellently as they discoursed on the beauty of virtue, their disquisitions generally seemed to want a motive and an end. Did not such a state of comfortless ignorance, of spiritual degradation, of moral depravity, emphatically call for a religion which should 'bring life and immortality to light?' Did it not imperatively require that Spirit which should 'reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment?' Did it not pant for that blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin.

Even those fine theorists who have left us beautiful reflections on the Divine nature, have bequeathed no rule for his worship, no direction for his service, no injunctions to obey him; they have given us little encouragement to virtue, and no alleviation to sorrow but the impracticable injunction, not to feel it. The eight short beatitudes in the 5th of Saint Matthew convey not only more promises to virtue, and more consolation to sufferers, but more appropriate promise to the individual grace, more specific comfort to the specific suffering, than are to be found in all the ancient tomes of moral discipline.

Those who were invested with a sacred character, and who delivered the pretended sense of the Oracles, talked much of the gods, but said little of goodness; while the philosophers who, though they were professors of wisdom, were, not generally to the vulgar, teachers of morals, seldom gave the Deity a place in their ethics. Between these conflicting instructors the people stood little chance of acquiring any just notions of moral rectitude. They were indeed under a necessity of attending the worship of the temples, they believed that the neglect of this duty would offend the gods; but in their attendance they were neither taught that purity of heart, nor that practical virtue, which might have been supposed likely to please them. The philosophers, if they were disposed to give the people some rules of duty, were overmatched by the priests, who knew they should gratify them more by omitting what they so little relished. As to the people themselves, they did not desire to be better than the priests wished to make them.—They found processions pleasanter than prayers, ceremonies cheaper than duties, and sacrifices easier than self-denials, with the additional recommendation, that the one made amends for the want of the other.*

When a violent plague raged in Rome, the method they took for appeasing the deities, and putting a stop to the distemper, was the establishment of a theatre and the introduction of plays. The plague however, having no dramatic taste, continued to rage. But neither the piety nor ingenuity of the suppliants was exhausted. A nail driven into the temple of Jupiter was found to be a more promising expedient. But the gods being as hard as the metal of which the expiation was made, were no more moved by the nail, than the plague had been by the theatrical exhibition; though the event was thought of sufficient importance for the creation of a dictator!—What progress had reason, to say nothing of religion, made in the first metropolis in the world, when a nail or a play was thought a rational expedient for pacifying the gods and stopping the pestilence. Nor does reason, mere human reason, seem to have grown wiser in her age. During the late attempt to establish heathenism in a neighbouring country, does it not look as if the thirty theatres which were opened every night in its capital in the early part of the revolution had been intended, in imitation of the Romans, whose religion, titles, and offices, the French affected to adopt, as a nightly expiation to the *Goddess of Reason* for the cruelties and carnage of the day?

Whatever conjectural notions some of the wise might entertain of a future state, the people at large could only acquire the vague and comfortless ideas of it, which might be picked up from the poets. This indefinite belief, immersed in fable, and degraded by the grossest superstition, added as little to the piety as to the happiness of mankind. The intimations of their Tartarus, and their Elysian fields, were so connected with fictions, as to convey to the mind no other impression, but that they were fictions themselves. Such uncertain glimmerings of such a futurity could afford neither warning nor encouragement, neither cheerful hope, nor salutary fear. They might amuse the mind, but never could influence the conduct. They might gratify the imagination, but could not communicate 'a hope full of immortality.' They neither animated the pious, nor succoured the tempted, nor supported the afflicted, nor cheered the dying.

The study of their mythology could carry with it nothing but corruption. It neither intended to bring glory to God, nor peace and good will, much less salvation, to men. It was invented to embellish the fabulous periods of their history, to flatter the illustrious families, by celebrating the human exploits of their deified progenitors: and thus to give an additional and national interest to their bewitching fables. What a system did those countries uphold, when the more probable way to make the people virtuous, was to keep them ignorant of religion!—when the best way to teach them their duty to man, was to keep their duties out of sight.

It is indeed but justice to acknowledge, the most of the different schools of philosophy held some one great truth. Aristotle maintained the existence of a First Cause; Cicero, in opposition to the disciples of Epicurus, acknowledged a superintending Providence. Many of the Stoics were of opinion, that the consummation of all things would be effected by fire. Yet every philosopher, however rational in many parts of his system, not only adopted some absurdity himself, but wove it into his code. One believed that the soul was only a vapour, which was transmuted from body to body, and was to expiate, in the shape of a brute, the sins it had committed under that of a man. Another affirmed that the soul was a material substance, and that matter was endowed with the faculties of thought and reason. Others imagined every star to be a god. Some denied not only a superintending, but a creating Providence: insisting that the world was made, without any plan or

* See Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity.

contrivance, by a fortuitous concourse of certain particles of matter; and that the members of the human body were not framed for the several purposes to which they have been accidentally applied. One affirmed the eternity of the world; another, that we can be certain of nothing,—that even our own existence is doubtful.

A religion so absurd, which had no basis even in probability and no attraction but what it borrowed from a preposterous fancy, could not satisfy the deep thinking philosopher; a philosophy abstruse and metaphysical was not sufficiently accommodated to general use to suit the people. Lactantius, on the authority of Plato, relates, that Socrates declared there was no such thing as human wisdom. In short, all were dissatisfied. The wise had a vague desire for religion which comprehended great objects, and had noble ends in view. The people stood in need of a religion which should bring relief to human wants, and consolation to human miseries. They wanted a simple way, proportioned to their comprehension; a short way, proportioned to their leisure; a living way, which would give light to the conscience and support to the mind; a way founded, not on speculation, but evidence, which should carry conversion to the heart as well as conviction to the understanding. Such a religion God was preparing for them in the Gospel of his Son. Christianity was calculated to supply the exigences both of the Greeks and of the barbarians; but the former, though they more acknowledged their want, more slowly welcomed the relief; while the latter, though they less felt the one, more readily accepted the other.

Alexander, though he had the magnanimity to declare to his illustrious preceptor, that he had rather excel in knowledge than in power, yet blamed him for divulging to the world those secrets in learning, which he wished to confine exclusively to themselves. How would he have been offended with the Christian philosophy, which, though it has mysteries for all, has no secrets for any! How would he have been offended with that bright hope of glory, which would have displayed itself in the same effulgence to his meanest soldier, as to the conqueror of Persia!

But how would both the monarch and the philosopher have looked on a religion, which after kindling their curiosity, by intimating it had greater things to bestow than learning and empire, should dash their high hopes, by making these great things consist in poverty of spirit, in being little in their own eyes, in not-loving the world, nor the things of the world.

But what would they have said to a religion which placed human intellect in an inferior degree in the scale of God's gifts; and even degraded it from thence, when not used to his glory? What would they have thought of a religion, which, so far from being sent exclusively to the conqueror in arms, or the leaders in science, frankly declared at its outset, that 'not many mighty, not many noble were called,' which professed, while it filled the hungry with good things, to send the rich empty away?

Yet that mysterious HOPE which Alexander declared was all he kept for himself, when he profusely scattered kingdoms among his favourites,—those ambiguous TEARS which he shed, because he had no more worlds to conquer; that deeply felt, but ill understood hope, those undefined and unintelligible tears, mark a profounder feeling of the vanity of this world, a more fervent panting after something better than power or knowledge, a more heart-felt 'longing after immortality,' than almost any express language which philosophy has recorded.

'Learn of me' would have been thought a dignified exordium for the founder of a new religion by the masters of the Grecian schools. But when they came to the humbling motive of the injunction, 'for I am meek and lowly in heart,' how would their expectations have been damped? They would have thought it an abject declaration from the lips of a great teacher, unless they had understood that grand paradox of Christianity, that lowliness of heart was among the highest attainments to be made by a rational creature.

When they had heard the beginning of that animating interrogation,—Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? methinks I behold the whole portico and academy emulously rush forward at an invitation so alluring, at a challenge so personal; but how instinctively would they have shrunk back at the repulsive question which succeeds;—Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Yet would not Christianity, well understood and faithfully received, have taught these exalted spirits, that, to look down upon what is humanly great, is a loftier attainment than to look up to it?

Would it not have carried a sentiment to the heart of Alexander, a system to the mind of Aristotle, which their respective, though differently pursued, careers of ambition utterly failed of furnishing to either?

Reason, even by those who possessed it in the highest perfection, as it gave no adequate view even of natural religion, so it made no adequate provision for correct morals. The attempt appears to have been above the reach of human powers. 'God manifested in the flesh,—He who was not only true, but THE TRUTH, and who taught the truth as 'one having authority,'—was alone competent to this great work. The duty of submission to Divine Power was to the multitude more intelligible, than the intricate deductions of reason. That God is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, make a compendious summary both of natural and revealed religion; they are propositions which carry their own explanation, disentangled from those trains of argument, which, as few could have been brought to comprehend, perhaps it was the greatest wisdom in the philosopher never to have proposed them.

The most skilful dialectician could only reason on known principles; but without the superinduction of revealed religion, he could only, with all his efforts, and they have been prodigious, furnish 'rules,' but not 'arms.' Logic is indeed a powerful weapon to fence, but not to fight with; that which is a conqueror in the schools is impotent in the field. It is powerful to refute a sophism, but weak to repel a tempta-

tion. It may defeat an opponent made up like itself of pure intellect; but is no match for so substantial an assailant as moral evil. It yields to the onset, when the antagonists are furious passions and headstrong appetites. It can make a successful thrust against an opinion, but is too feeble to 'pull down the strong holds of sin and Satan.'

If, through the strength of human corruption, the restraining power of Divine grace is still too frequently resisted,—if the offered light of the Holy Spirit is still too frequently quenched, what must have been the state of mankind, when that grace was not made known, when that light was not fully revealed, when 'darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people?' But under the clear illumination of evangelical truth, every precept becomes a principle, every argument a motive, every direction a duty, every doctrine a law; and why? *Because thus saith the Lord.*

Christianity, however, is not merely a religion of authority; the soundest reason embraces most confidently what the most explicit revelation has taught, and the deepest inquirer is usually the most convinced Christian. The reason of philosophy, is a disputing reason, that of Christianity, an obeying reason. The glory of the pagan religion consisted in virtuous sentiments, the glory of the Christian in the pardon and the subjugation of sin. The humble Christian may say with one of the ancient Fathers.—I will not glory because I am righteous, but because I am redeemed.

CHAP. II.

On the Historical writers of the New Testament.

Among the innumerable evidences of the truth of Christianity, there is one of so rare and extraordinary a nature, as might of itself suffice to carry conviction to the mind of every unprejudiced inquirer, even if this proof were not accompanied by such a cloud of concurring testimonies.

The sacred volume is composed by a vast variety of writers, men of every different rank and condition, of every diversity of character and turn of mind: the monarch and the plebian, the illiterate and the learned, the foremost in talent and the moderately gifted in natural advantages, the historian and the legislator, the orator and the poet,—each had his immediate vocation, each his peculiar province: some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists, living in ages remote from each other, under different modes of civil government, under different dispensations of the Divine economy, filling a period of time which reached from the first dawn of heavenly light to its meridian radiance. The Old Testament and the New, the law and the gospel; the prophets predicting events, and the evangelists recording them; the doctrinal yet didactic epistolary writers and he who closed the Sacred Canon in the apocalyptic vision;—all these furnished their respective portions, and yet all tally with a dovetailed correspondence; all the different materials are joined with a completeness the most satisfactory, with an agreement the most incontrovertible.

This instance of uniformity without design, of agreement without contrivance; this consistency maintained through a long series of ages, without a possibility of the ordinary methods for conducting such a plan; these unparalleled congruities, these unexampled coincidences, form altogether a species of evidence, of which there is no other instance in the history of all the other books in the world.

All these variously gifted writers here enumerated, concur in this grand peculiarity, that all have the same end in view, all are pointing to the same object, all, without any projected collusion, are advancing the same scheme; each brings in his several contingent, without any apparent consideration how it may unite with the portions brought by other contributors, without any spirit of accommodation, without any visible intention to make out a case, without indeed any actual resemblance, more than that every separate portion being derived from the same spring, each must be governed by one common principle, and that principle being Truth itself, must naturally and consentaneously produce assimilation, conformity, agreement. What can we conclude from all this, but what is indeed the inevitable conclusion,—a conclusion which forces itself on the mind, and compels the submission of the understanding; that all this, under differences of administration, is the work of one and the same great, Omniscient, and Eternal Spirit.

If, however, from the general uniformity of plan, visible throughout the whole Sacred Canon, results one of the most cogent and complete arguments for its Divine original, others will also rise from its mode of execution, its peculiar diversities, and some other circumstances attending it, not so easily brought under one single point of view.—Does it not look as if Almighty Wisdom refused to divide the glory of his revelation with man, when, passing by the shining lights of the pagan world, He chose, in the promulgation of the Gospel, to make use of men of ordinary endowments, men possessing the usual defects and prejudices of persons so educated and so circumstanced? Not only the other immediate followers, but even the biographers of Christ, were persons of no distinguished abilities. Integrity was almost their sole, as it were the most requisite qualification. On this point it is not too much to maintain, that the writings of each of these men are not only so consistent with each other, but also with themselves, as to offer, individually, as well as aggregately, a proof of their own veracity, as well as of the truth itself.

Had they, however, all recorded uniformly the same more inconsiderable particulars; had there not been that natural diversity, that incidental variation, observable in all other historians;—had not one preserved passages which the others overlooked, some recording more of the actions of Jesus, others treasuring up more of his discourses; some particularizing the circumstances of his birth; others only referring to it as a fact not requiring fresh authentication; another again

plainly adverting to it by 'the WORD that was made flesh, and dwelt among us;' and adding a new circumstance by citing the testimony of the Baptist to 'the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world;'—in short, had there been in the several relations not mere consistency, but positive identity, then, not only the fidelity of the writers would have been questionable, and concert and design justly have been suspected, but we should in effect have had only the testimony of one Gospel instead of four.

But to pass to other evidences of truth.—The manner in which these writers speak of themselves, is at once a proof of their humility and of their veracity. The conversion of Saint Matthew is slightly related by himself and in the most modest terms. He simply says, speaking in the third person; 'Jesus saw a man named Matthew, and saith unto him, Follow me: and he arose and followed him: and as Jesus sat at meat in the house, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him.'* Not a word is said of a sacrifice so honourable to himself, and so generously recorded by Saint Luke in those words, *he left all*, and followed him; not a word of the situation he renounced at the first call of the Master, and which appears to have been lucrative, from 'the great feast he made for him in his own house, and the great company of publicans and others who sat down with him.'† Saint Luke relates only his hospitality; Saint Matthew, as if to abase himself the more, describes only the sinners which made up his society previous to his conversion.

These sober recorders of events the most astonishing, are never carried away by the circumstances they relate, into any pomp of diction, into any use of superlatives. There is not, perhaps, in the whole Gospel a single interjection, nor an exclamation, nor any artifice to call the readers attention to the marvels of which the relaters were the witnesses. Absorbed in their holy task, no alien idea presents itself to their mind: the object before them fills it. They never digress, are never called away by the solicitations of vanity, or the suggestions of curiosity. No image starts up to divert their attention. There is indeed, in the Gospels, much imagery, much allusion, much allegory, but they proceed from their Lord, and are recorded as his. The writers never fill up the intervals between events. They leave circumstances to make their own impression, instead of helping out the reader by any reflections of their own. They always feel the holy ground on which they stand. They preserve the gravity of history and the severity of truth, without enlarging the outline or swelling the expression.

The Evangelists all agree in this most unequivocal character of veracity, that of criminating themselves. They record their own errors and offences with the same simplicity with which they relate the miracles and sufferings of their Lord. Indeed their dulness, mistakes, and failings are so intimately blended with his history, by their continual demands upon his patience and forbearance, as to make no inconsiderable or unimportant part of it.

This fidelity is equally amiable both in the composition, and in the preservation of the Old Testament, a book which every where testifies against those whose history it contains, and not seldom against the relators themselves. The author of the Pentatauch proclaims, in the most pointed terms, the ingratitude of the chosen people towards God. He prophesies that they will go on filling up the measure of their offences, calls heaven and earth to witness against them that he has delivered his own soul, declares that as they have worshipped gods which were no gods, God will punish them by calling a people who were no people. Yet this book, so disgraceful to their national character, this register of their own offences, they would rather die than lose. 'This,' says the admirable Pascal, 'is an instance of integrity which has no example in the world, no root in nature. In the Pentateuch and the Gospel, therefore, these parallel, these unequalled instances of sincerity, are incontrovertible proofs of the truth of both.

It is obvious that the impression which was to be made should owe nothing to the skill, but every thing to the veracity of the writers. They never tried to improve upon the doctrines or the requirements of their Master, by mixing their own wisdom with them. Though their views were not clear, their obedience was implicit. It was not, however, a mere mechanical obedience, but an undisputing submission to the Divine teaching. Even at the glorious scene of the Transfiguration, their amazement did not get the better of their fidelity. There was no vain impatience to disclose the wonders which had passed, and of which they had been allowed the honour of being witnesses. Though they inserted it afterwards in their narrations, 'they, as they were commanded, kept it close, and told no man in those days what they had seen.'

The simplicity of the narrative is never violated; there is even no panegyric on the august person they commemorate, not a single epithet of commendation. When they mention an extraordinary effect of his divine eloquence, it is history, not eulogy, that speaks. They say nothing of their own admiration; it is '*the people* who were astonished at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.' Again, it was 'the *multitudes* marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel.' Again, it was the *officers*, not the writer, who said, 'never man spake like this man.'

In recording the most stupendous events, we are never called to an exhibition of their own pity, or their own admiration. In relating the most soul-moving circumstance, there is no attempt to be pathetic, no aim to work up the feelings of the reader, no appeal to his sympathy, no studied finish, no elaborate excitement. Jesus wept;—no comment. He is hungry;—no compassion escapes them. He is transfigured;—no expression of astonishment. He is agonized;—the narrative does not rise in emphasis. He is betrayed;—no execration to the betrayer. He is condemned;—no animadversions on the iniquitous judge; while their own denial and desertion are faithfully recorded. He expires;—no remark on the tremendous catastrophe, no display of their own sorrow. Facts alone sup-

* Matthew, ch. ix. † St. Luke, ch. v.

ply the void; and what facts? The earth quakes, the sun is eclipsed, the graves give up their dead. In such a history, it is very true, fidelity was praise, fact was glory. And yet, if, on the one hand, there were no need of the rhetorician's art to embellish the tale, what mere rhetoricians could have abstained from using it?

Thus, it seems obvious, that unlettered men were appointed to this great work, in order that the success of the Gospel might not be suspected of owing any thing to natural ability, or to splendid attainment. This arrangement while it proves the astonishing progress of Christianity to have been caused by its own energy, serves to remove every just suspicion of the contrivance of fraud, the collusions of interest, or the artifices of invention.

Had the first apostles been men of genius, they might have injured the purity of the Gospel by bringing their ingenuity into it.—Had they been men of learning, they might have imported from the schools of Greece and Rome, each from his own sect, some of its peculiar infusions, and thus have vitiated the simplicity of the Gospel. Had they been critics and philosophers, there might have been endless debates which part of Christianity was the power of God, and which the result of man's wisdom. Thus, though corruptions soon crept into the church, yet no impurities could reach the Gospel itself. Some of its teachers became heretical, but the pure word remained unadulterated. However, the philosophizing or the Judaizing teachers might subsequently infuse their own errors into their own preaching, the Gospel preserved its own integrity. They might mislead their followers, but they could not deteriorate the New Testament.

It required different gifts to promulgate and to maintain Christianity. The Evangelists did not so much attempt to argue the truth of the Redeemer's doctrines, as practically to prove that they were of Divine origin. If called on for a defence, they worked a miracle. If they could not produce a cogent argument, they could produce a paralytic walking. If they could not open the eyes of the prejudiced, they could open the eyes of the blind. Such attestation was to the eye-witnesses, argument the most unanswerable. The most illiterate persons could judge of this species of evidence so peculiar to Christianity. He could know whether he saw a sick man restored to life by a word, or a lame man take up his bed and walk, or one who had been dead four days, instantly obey the call—'Lazarus, come forth!' About a sentiment there might be a diversity of suffrages; about an action which all saw, all could entertain but one opinion. The caviller might have refuted a syllogysm, and a fallacy might have imposed on the multitude, but no sophistry could counteract occular demonstration.

But as God does nothing in vain, so he never employs irrelevant instruments or superfluous means. He therefore did not see fit to be at the expense of a perpetual miracle to maintain and carry on that church which he had thought proper to establish by miraculous powers. When, therefore, the Gospel was immutably fixed on its own eternal basis, and its truth unimpeachably settled by the authentic testimony of so many eye witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; a writer was brought forward, contemporary, but not connected with them. Not only was he not confederate with the first instituters of Christianity; but so implacably hostile was he to them, that he had assisted at the death of the first martyr.

As the attestation of one notorious enemy in favour of a cause, is considered equivalent to that of many friends; thus did this distinguished adversary seem to be raised up to confirm and ratify all the truths he had so furiously opposed; to become the most able advocate of the cause he had reprobated, the most powerful champion of the Saviour he had vilified. He was raised up to unfold more at large those doctrines which could not be so explicitly developed in the historical portions, while an immediate revelation from heaven supplied to him the actual opportunities and advantages which the Evangelists had enjoyed. Nothing short of such a Divine communication could have placed Saint Paul on a level with the other apostles; had he been taught of man, he must have been inferior to those who were taught of Jesus.

For Saint Paul had not the honour to be the personal disciple of his Lord. His conversion and preaching were subsequent to the illumination of the Gospel; an intimation possibly, that though revelation and human learning should not be considered as sharing between them the work of spiritual instruction, yet that human learning might henceforward become a valuable adjunct, and a most suitable, though subordinate accessory in maintaining the cause of that Divine truth which it had no hand in establishing.

The ministry of Paul was not to be circumscribed, as that of his immediate precursors had been, by the narrow limits of the Jewis church. As he was designated to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, as he was to bear his testimony before rulers and scholars; as he was to carry his mission into the presence of 'kings, and not be ashamed,'—it pleased Infinite Wisdom, which always fits the instrument to the work, and the talent to the exigence, to accommodate most exactly the endowments of Paul to the demands that would be made upon them; and as Divine Providence caused Moses to acquire in Egypt the learning which was to prepare him for the legislator of a people so differently circumstanced, it pleased the same Infinite Wisdom to convey to Paul, through the mouth of a Jewish teacher, the knowledge he was to employ for the Gentiles, and to adapt his varied acquirements to the various ranks, characters, prejudices, and local circumstances of those before whom he was to advocate the noblest cause ever assigned to man.

Of all these providential advantages he availed himself with a wisdom, aptness, and appropriateness, without a parallel;—a wisdom derived from that Divine Spirit which guided all his thoughts, words, and actions: and with a teachableness which demonstrated that he was never *disobedient to the heavenly vision.*

Indeed it seemed necessary, in order to demonstrate that the principles of Christianity are not unattainable, nor its precepts impracticable,

that the New Testament should in some part, present to us a full exemplification of its doctrines and of its spirit; that they should to produce their practical effect, be embodied in a form purely human,—for the character of the founder of its religion is deified humanity. Did the Scriptures present no such exhibition, infidelity might have availed itself of the omission, for the purpose of asserting that Christianity was only a bright chimera, a beautiful fiction of the imagination; and Plato's fair idea might have been brought into competition with the doctrines of the Gospel. But in St. Paul is exhibited a portrait which not only illustrates its Divine truth, but establishes its moral efficacy; a portrait entirely free from any distortion in the drawing, from any extravagance in the colouring.

It is the representation of a man struggling with the sins and infirmities natural to man; yet habitually triumphing over them by that Divine grace which had first rescued him from prejudice, bigotry, and unbelief.—It represents him resisting, not only such temptations as are common to men, but surmounting trials to which no other man was ever called; furnishing in his whole practice not only an instructor, but a model; showing every where in his writings, that the same offers, the same supports, the same victories, are tendered to every suffering child of mortality,—that the waters of eternal life are not restricted to prophets and apostles, but are offered freely to every one that thirsteth—offered without money and without price.

CHAP. III.

On the epistolary writers of the New Testament, particularly St. Paul.

Can the reader of taste and feeling who has followed the much enduring hero of the Odyssey with growing delight and increasing sympathy, though in a work of fiction, through all his wanderings, peruse with inferior interest the genuine voyages of the Apostle of the Gentiles over nearly the same seas? The fabulous adventurer, once landed, and safe on the shores of his own Ithica, the reader's mind is satisfied for the object of his anxiety is at rest. But not so ends the tale of the Christian hero. Whoever closed Saint Luke's narrative of the diversified events of Saint Paul's travels; whoever accompanied him with the interest his history demands, from the commencement of his trials at Damascus to his last deliverance from shipwreck, and left him *preaching in his own hired house at Rome*, without feeling as if he had abruptly lost sight of some one very dear to him, without sorrowing that they should see his face no more, without indulging a wish that the intercourse could have been carried on to the end, though that end were martyrdom.

Such readers, and perhaps only such, will rejoice to renew their acquaintance with this *very chiefest of the Apostles*; not indeed in the communication of subsequent facts, but of important principles; not in the records of the biographer, but in the doctrines of the saint. In fact, to the history of Paul in the Sacred Oracles succeed his Epistles. And these Epistles, as if through design, open with that 'to the beloved of God called to be saints' in that very city, the mention of his residence in which concludes the preceding narrative.

Had the Sacred Canon closed with the evangelical narrations, had it not been determined in the counsels of Divine Wisdom, that a subsequent portion of inspired Scripture in another form, should have been added to the historical portions, that the Epistles should have conveyed to us the results of the mission and the death of Christ, how immense would have been the disadvantage, and how irreparable the loss: May we presume to add, how much less perfect would have been our view of the scheme of Christianity, had the New Testament been curtailed of this important portion of religious and practical instruction.

We should indeed have felt the same adoring gratitude for the benefits of the Redeemer, but we should have been in comparative ignorance of the events consequent upon his resurrection. We should have been totally at a loss to know how and by whom the first Christian churches were founded; how they were conducted, and what was their progress. We should have had but a slender notion of the manner in which Christianity was planted, and how wonderfully it flourished in the heathen soil. Above all, we should have been deprived of that divine instruction, equally the dictate of the Holy Spirit, with which the Epistles abound; or, which would have been worse than ignorance, uninspired men, fanatics, or impostors would have attached to the Gospel their glosses, conceits, errors, and misinterpretations.—We should have been turned over for information to some of those spurious gospels, and more than doubtful epistles, of which mention is made in the early part of ecclesiastical history. What attempts might have been made by such writers, to amuse curiosity with a sequel of the history of the persons named in the New Testament! How might they have misled us by unprofitable details of the Virgin Mary, or of Joseph of Arimathea!

What legends might have been invented, what idolatry even might have been incorporated with the true worship of God; what false history appended to the authentic record! Not only is the Divine Wisdom manifest in carrying on through the Epistles a confirmation of the Spirit and power of Christianity, but the same design is no less apparent in closing the book with the Apocalypse,—a writing which contains the testimony of the last surviving disciple of Jesus is extreme old age, to which he seems to have been providentially preserved for the very purpose of protecting the Gospel from innovations which were beginning to corrupt it.

The narratives of the Evangelists would indeed have remained perfect in themselves, even without the Epistles; but never could its truths have been so clearly understood, or its doctrines so fully developed, as they now are. Our Saviour himself intimated, that there would be a more full and complete knowledge of his doctrines, after he had ceased to deliver them, than

there was at the time. How indeed could the doctrine of the atonement, and of pardon through his blood, have been so explicitly set forth during his life, as they afterwards were in the Epistles, especially in those of St. Paul.

Saint Luke, in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, referring the friend to whom he inscribes it, to his 'former Treatise of all that Jesus began to do, and to teach, till he was taken up, after that he had through the Holy Ghost given commandment to the Apostles' seems plainly to indicate that the *doing* and the *teaching* were to be carried on by them. All their doubts were at length removed. They had now a plenary conviction of the divinity of Christ's person, and of the dignity of his mission. They had now witnessed his glorious resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. They had attained the fullest assurance of the truths they were to proclaim, and had had time to acquire the completest certainty of their moral efficacy on the heart and life.

It was therefore ordained by that Wisdom which cannot err, that the Apostles, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, should work up all the doctrines of the anterior Scriptures into a more systematic form:—that they should more fully unfold their doctrines, extract the essence of their separate maxims, collect the scattered rays of spiritual light into a focus; and blend the whole into one complete body.

The Epistles, therefore, are an estimable appendix to the Evangelists. The memoir, which contains the actions of the Apostles, the work of an Evangelist also, stands between these two portions of the New Testament. Thus, no chasm is left, and the important events which this connecting link supplies—particularly the descent of the Holy Spirit, the emblematic vision of Saint Peter, and the conversion and apostleship of Saint Paul,—naturally prepare the mind for that full and complete commentary on the historical books, which the Epistles, more especially those of Saint Paul, present to us.

St. Paul was favoured with a particular revelation, a personal disclosure to him of the truths with which the other disciples were previously acquainted. This special distinction placed Paul on a level with his precursors. Though, in point of fact, he added nothing to the Gospel revelation, and in point of doctrine he only gave a larger exposition of truths previously communicated, of duties already enjoined, yet here was the warrant of his teaching, the broad seal of his apostleship. And unless we fall into the gross error of insisting that the Epistles in general would not equally be given by inspiration with other parts of the New Testament, I see not how any can withhold, from the Epistles of St. Paul in particular, that reverence which they profess to entertain for the entire letter of revelation.

It is a hardship to which all writers on subjects exclusively religious are liable, that if, while they are warmly pressing some great and important point, they omit at the same time, to urge some other point of great moment also, which they equally believe, but which they cannot in that connexion introduce without breaking in on their immediate train of argument, they are accused of rejecting what they are obliged to overlook, though in its proper place they have repeatedly insisted upon that very truth; nay, though the whole tendency of their writings shows their equal faith in the doctrine they are said to have neglected. To this disingenuous treatment, amongst other more serious attacks upon his character, no author has been more obnoxious than the Apostle Paul. It has been often intimated, that in dwelling on the efficacy of the death of Christ, he has not urged with sufficient frequency and energy the importance of Christian practice. He seems himself to have foreseen the probability of this reproach, and has accordingly provided against the consequence that would be drawn from his positions, if taken separately. It would be an endless task to cite the passages in which he is continually defending his doctrine against these anticipated misrepresentations. Among other modes of refutation, he sometimes states these false charges in the way of interrogatories: 'Do we make void the law through faith?' And not contented with the solemn negative, 'God forbid!' he adds a positive affirmative to the contrary: 'Yea we *establish* the law.' In a similar manner he is beforehand with his censors in denying the expected charge—'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?' and he obtests the same Almighty name to his opposite practice. Readers, of different views, are without ceasing, on the watch to take advantage of all the epistolary writers in this respect, while the fair method would surely be to form the general judgment, from the whole tenor and collective spirit of their writings.

But it has been argued with still greater boldness, that St. Paul was not a disciple.—Granted. But his miraculous conversion entitled him to the confidence, which some men more willingly place in those who were. This event is substantially recorded by Saint Luke: as if he foresaw the distrust which might hereafter arise, he has added to his first relation, in the 9th chapter of the Acts, two several reports of the same circumstance made by Saint Paul himself, first to the Jews, and afterwards to Festus and Agrippa. As Luke has recorded this astonishing fact three several times, we are not left to depend for its truth entirely on Saint Paul's own frequent allusions to it.

Much suspicion of this great Apostle is avowedly grounded on the remark of Saint Peter, who in adverting to his 'beloved brother Paul,' observes, that 'in his Epistles are some things hard to be understood, which they who are unstable and unlearned wrest to their own destruction.' Here the critic would desire to stop, or rather to garble the sentence which adds, 'as they do also the other Scriptures;' thus casting the accusation, not upon Saint Paul or 'the other Scriptures,' but upon the misinterpreters of both. But Saint Peter farther includes in the same passage, that 'Paul accounts the long-suffering of God to be salvation, *according to the wisdom given him.*' It is apparent, therefore, that though there may be more difficulty, there is not more danger in Saint Paul's Epistles, than in the rest of the Sacred Volume. Let us also observe what is the character of these subverters of truth,—

the 'unstable' in principle and 'unlearned' in doctrine. If, then, you feel yourself in danger of being misled, in which of these classes will you desire to enrol your name? But it is worthy of observation, that, in this supposed censure of Saint Peter, we have in reality a most valuable testimony, not only to the excellence, but also to the inspiration of Saint Paul's writings; for he not only ascribes their composition to *the wisdom given unto him*, but puts them on a par with *the other Scriptures*,—a double corroboration of their Divine character.

This passage of St. Peter, then, is so far from impugning the character of Paul to Divine Inspiration, that we have here the fact itself established upon the authority of a favourite disciple and companion of Jesus. To invalidate such a testimony would be no less than to shake the pillars of revelation.

Besides, as an eminent divine has observed, 'if Saint Paul had been only a good man writing under that general assistance of the Spirit common to good men, it would be ascribing far too much to his compositions to suppose that the misunderstanding them could effect the *destruction* of the reader.'

Saint Peter says only, that 'some things' are difficult; but are there not difficulties in every part of Divine revelation, in all the operations of God, in all the dispensations of Providence; difficulties insuperable in the natural as well as the spiritual world? Difficulties in the formation of the human body; in the union of that perishable body with its immortal companion? Is it not then probable that some difficulties in various parts of the Divine Oracles may be purposely left for the humiliation of pride, for the exercise of patience, for the test of submission, for the honour of faith? But allowing that in Paul some things *are* hard to be understood, that is no reason for rejecting such things as are easy, for rejecting *all* things. Why should the very large proportion that is clear, be slighted for the very small one that is obscure? Scholars do not so treat an ancient poet or historian. One or two perplexing passages, instead of shaking the credit of an author, rather whet the critic to a nearer investigation. Even if the local difficulty should prove invincible, it does not lessen the general interest excited by the work. They who compare spiritual things with spiritual, which is the true Biblical criticism, must perceive that the epistolary writers do not more entirely agree with each other, than they agree with the doctrines, precepts, and promises delivered on the Mount. And as the Sermon on the Mount is an exposition of the law of Moses, so the Epistles are an exposition of the law of Christ. Yet some persons discredit the one, from an exclusive veneration for the other.

But is it not so derogatory from the dignity of our Lord to disparage the epistolary discussions written under the direction of his Holy Spirit, written with a view to lay open in the clearest manner the truths he taught in the Gospel, as it would be to depreciate the facts themselves, which that Gospel records?

The more general respect for the Gospels seems partly to arise from the circumstance that they contain facts: the disregard implied for the Epistles from this cause,—that they enforce doctrines. The former, the generality feel they dare not resist; the latter they think they can oppose with more impunity. But of how much less value would be the record of these astonishing facts if there were neither doctrines to grow out of them, nor precepts to be built upon them! And where should we look for the full instruction to be deduced from both, but in the commentaries of those, to whom the charge of expounding the truths previously taught was committed? Our Saviour himself has left no written record. As the Father committed all judgment to the Son, so the Son committed all written instruction to his select servants.

One of these, who had written a Gospel, wrote also three Epistles. Another carried on the sequel of the Evangelical history. If these men are worthy of confidence in one instance, why not in another? Fourteen of the Epistles were written by one who had an express revelation from Heaven; all the rest, the single chapter of Saint Jude excepted, by the distinguished apostles who were honoured with the privilege of witnessing the transfiguration of their Lord. The three Epistles of Saint John are only a prolonged expression of the devout feelings which breathe throughout his narrative, the same lively manifestation of the *word made flesh*, which shines throughout his Gospel.

In the Gospel, the doctrines and precepts are more dogmatically enjoined: in the Epistles they are enforced more argumentatively. The structure of the Epistle addressed to the Romans is the most systematical. All are equally consistent with each other, and with the general tenor of the antecedent Scriptures.

Does it not look as if the marked distinction which some readers make between the historical and the epistolary portions, arose from a most erroneous belief that they can more commodiously reconcile their own views, opinions, and practice, with the narratives of the Evangelists, than with the keen, penetrating, heart-exploring exposition of those very doctrines which are equally found, but not equally expanded, in the Gospels? These critical discoverers, however, may rest assured, that there is nothing more strong, nothing more pointed, nothing more unequivocally plain, nothing more awfully severe in any part of Saint Paul's writings than in the discourses of our Lord himself. He would indeed have overshot his duty in the same proportion in which he had outgone his Master. Does Paul enjoin any thing more contrary to nature than the excision of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye? Does Paul any where exhibit a menace, I will not say *more* alarming, but so repeatedly alarming, as his Divine Master, who expressly, in one chapter only, the 9th of St. Mark, three several times denounces eternal punishment on the irreclaimably impenitent, awfully marking out not only the specific place, but the specific torment,—the undying worm, and the unquenched fire?

No: these scrupulous objectors add nothing to the character of our Lord, by what they subduct from that of his apostle. Perfection admits of no improvement; deity of no addition. To degrade any portion of the revealed will of God,

is no proof of reverence for Him whose will is revealed. But it is preposterous to insinuate, that a regard for the Epistles is calculated to diminish a regard for the Gospels. Where else can we find such believing, such admiring, such adoring views of him whose life the Gospel records? Where else are we so grounded in that love which passeth knowledge? Where else are we so continually taught to be looking unto Jesus? Where else are we so powerfully reminded that there is no other name under heaven by which we may be saved? We may as well assert, that the existing laws, of which *Magna Charta* is the original, diminish our reverence for this palladium itself; this basis of our political security, as the Gospel is of our moral and spiritual privileges. In both cases the derived benefit sends us back to the well-head from whence it flows.

He who professes to read the Holy Scriptures for his 'instruction,' should recollect, whenever he is disposed to be captious, that they are written also for his correction. If we really believe that Christ speaks to us in the Gospel, we must believe that he speaks to us in the Epistles also. In the one he addresses us in his militant, in the other in his glorified character. In one, the Divine Instructor speaks to us on earth; in the other, from heaven. The internal wisdom, the divinity of the doctrines, the accordance both of doctrine and precept with those delivered by the Saviour himself, the powerful and abiding effects which, for near two thousand years they have produced, and are actually producing, on the hearts and lives of multitudes; the same spirit which inspired the writer is still ready to assist the reader; all together forming, to every serious inquirer who reads them with an humble heart and a docile spirit, irrefragable arguments, unimpeachable evidence that they possess as full a claim to inspiration, and consequently have as forcible demand on his belief and obedience, as any of the less litigated portions of the book of God.

Whoever, then, shall sit down to the perusal of these epistles without prejudice, will not rise from it without improvement. In any human science we do not lay aside the whole, because some parts are more difficult than others; we are rather stimulated to the work by the difficulty, than deterred from it; because we believe the attainment will reward the perseverance. There is, indeed, an essential difference between a diagram and a doctrine, the apprehension of the one solely depending on the capacity and application of the student, while the understanding of the other depends not merely on the industry, but on the temper with which we apply. 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him.'

Let any reader say, if after perusing Saint Luke's biographical sketch of the Acts of the Apostles, after contemplating the work of the Spirit of God, and its effects on the lives and the preaching of these primitive saints, whether he has not attained an additional insight into the genius and the results of Christianity since he finished reading the Evangelist? Let him say further, whether the light of Revelation, shining more and more as he advances, does not, in his adding the perusal of the Epistles to that of the Acts, pour in upon his mental eye the full and perfect day?

As there was more leisure, as well as a more appropriate space, in the Epistles for building up Christianity as a system than in the Gospels, so these wise master-builders, 'building on no other foundation than that which was laid,' borrowed all the materials for the glorious edifice from the anterior Scriptures. They brought from their precursors in the immortal work, the hewn stones with which the spiritual temple is constructed, and having compacted it with that which every portion supplied; squared, rounded, and polished the precious mass into perfect form and shape, into complete beauty and everlasting strength.

CHAP. IV.

Saint Paul's Faith, a Practical Principle.

THERE are some principles and seeds of nature, some elements in the character of man, not indisposed for certain acts of virtue; we mean virtue as distinguished from the principle of pleasing God by the act or sentiment. Some persons naturally hate cruelty, others spurn at injustice, this man detests covetousness, that abhors oppression. Some of these dispositions certain minds find, and others fancy, within themselves. But for a man to go entirely out of himself, to live upon trust, to renounce all confidence in virtues which he possesses, and in actions which he performs,; to cast himself entirely upon another; to seek to be justified, not by his own obedience, but by the obedience of that other; to look for eternal happiness, not from the merit of his own life, but from that of another's death, that death the most degrading, after a life the most despised; for all this revolution in the mind and heart, there is no foundation, no seed, no element in nature; it is foreign to the make of man; if possessed, it is bestowed; if felt, it is derived; it is not a production, but an infusion; it is a principle, not indigenous, but implanted. The Apostle implies that faith is not inherent, when he says, 'to you it is *given* to believe.'

This superinduced principle is Faith, a principle not only not inherent in nature, but diametrically contrary to it; a principle which takes no root in the soil of the natural heart; *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.* Its result is not merely a reform, but a new life,—a life governed by the same principle which first communicated it.

The faith of mere assent, that faith which is purely a conviction of the understanding seldom stirs beyond the point at which it first sits down. Being established on the same common ground with any scientific truth, or any acknowledged fact, it is not likely to advance, desiring nothing more than to retain its station among other accepted truths, and thus it continues to reside in the intellect alone. Though its local existence is allowed, it exhibits none of the undoubted signs of life,—activity, motion, growth.

But that vital faith with which the souls of the Scripture saints were so richly imbued, is an animating and pervading principle. It spreads and enlarges in its progress. It gathers energy as its proceeds. The more advanced are its attainments, the more prospective are its views. The nearer it approaches to the invisible realities to which it is stretching forward, the more their dominion over it increases, till it almost makes the future present, and the unseen visible. Its light becomes brighter, its flame purer, its aspirations stronger. Its increasing proximity to its object fills the mind, warms the heart, clears the sight, quickens the pace.

But as faith is of a spiritual nature, it cannot be kept alive without spiritual means. It requires for its sustenance aliment congenial with itself. Meditation familiarizes it with its object; prayer keeps it close to its end. If thus cherished by perpetual exercise, sustained by the habitual contemplation of the oracles of God, and watered with the dews of his grace, it becomes the pregnant seed of every Christian virtue.

The Holy Scriptures have not left this faith to grow merely out of the stock of injunction, exhortation or command; the inspired writers have not merely expatiated on its beauty as a grace, on its necessity as a duty, on its use as an instrument, but having infused it as a living and governing principle, have fortified their exhortations with instances the most striking, have illustrated their definitions with examples the most impressive.

The most indefatigable but rational champion of faith is the Apostle Paul. He every where demonstrates, that it is not a speculative dogma remaining dormant in the mind, but a lively conviction of the power and goodness of God, and of his mercy in Christ Jesus; a principle received into the heart, acknowledged by the understanding, and operating on the practice.

Saint Paul, among the other sacred authors, seems to consider that faith is to the soul, what the senses are to the body; it is spiritual sight. God is the object, faith is the visual ray. Christ is the substance, faith is the hand which lays hold on it. By faith the promises are in a manner substantiated. Our Saviour does not say, 'he that believeth on me *shall have life*, but *has* life.' It is not a blessing, of which the fruition is wholly reserved for heaven: in a spiritual sense, through faith the promise becomes performance, and assurance possession. The immortal seed is not only sown, but already sprung up in the soil of the renewed heart. The life of grace becomes the same in nature and quality with the life of glory, to which it leads. And if in this ungenial climate the plant will not attain its maturity, at least its progress intimates that it will terminate in absolute perfection.

In that valuable epitome of Old Testament biography, the eleventh of Hebrews, Paul defines faith to be a future but inalienable possession. He then exhibits the astonishing effects of faith displayed in men like ourselves, by marshalling the worthies who lived under the ancient economy, as actual evidences of the verity of this Divine principle; a principle which he thus, by numberless personifications, vindicates from the charge of being nothing more than an abstract notion, a visionary, unproductive conceit, or an imaginary enthusiastic feeling. He combats this opinion by exhibiting characteristically the rich and the abundant harvest, springing from this prolific principle. On these illustrious examples our limits will not permit us to dwell; one or two instances must suffice.

The patriarchal father of the faithful, against hope believed in hope. Natural reliance, reasonable expectation, common experience, all were against him. From all these impediments he averted his eyes; he raised them to Him who had promised. Though the promise was so great as to seem incredible, his confidence in Omnipotence overbalanced all his apprehensions of any hindrances. With the eye of faith he not only saw his offspring as if immediately granted, but all the myriads which should hereafter descend from him. He saw the great anticipated blessing; he saw 'the star come out of Jacob,'—'the sceptre rises out of Israel.' Though an exclamation of wonder escaped him, it was astonishment untinctured with distrust; he disregarded second causes; difficulties disappeared, impossibilities vanished, faith was victorious.

In this glorious catalogue of those who conquered by faith, there is perhaps not one who offers a more appropriate lesson to the higher classes of society than the great legislator of Israel. Here is a man sitting at ease in his possessions, enjoying the sweets of plenty, the dignity of rank, the luxuries of literature, the distinction of reputation. All these he voluntarily renounces; he foregoes the pomps of a court, the advantages of a city, then the most learned in the world; he relinquishes the delights of polished society: refused to be called the grandson of a potent monarch; chooses rather to suffer affliction with his believing brethren than to enjoy the temporary pleasures which a sinful connivance could have obtained for him: he esteems the reproach of Christ,—a Saviour unborn till many ages after, unknown but to the eye of faith,—greater than all the treasures of Egypt. The accomplished, the learned, and the polite, will be best able to appreciate the value of such a sacrifice. Does it not seem to come more home to the bosoms of the elegant and opulent; and to offer an instruction more intimate perhaps than is bequeathed even by those martial and heroic spirits who subdued kingdoms, quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens? These are instances of faith, which, if more sublime, are still of less special application. Few are now called to these latter sufferings, but many in their measure and degree to the other. May they ever bear in mind that Moses sustained his trials only *as seeing him who is invisible!*

To change the heart of a sinner is a higher exertion of power than to create a man or even a world; in the latter case, as God made it out of nothing, so there was nothing to resist the operation; but in the former he has to encounter, not inanity, but repulsion: not an unobtrusive vacuity, but a powerful counteraction; and to *believe* in the Divine energy which effects this renovation, is a greater exercise of faith than to

believe that the Spirit of God, moving on the face of the waters, was the efficient cause of creation.

In producing this moral renovation God has to subdue, not only the rebel in arms against the king, but 'the little state of man,' in arms against himself, fighting against his convictions, refusing the redemption wrought for him. Almighty goodness has the two-fold work of providing pardon for offenders, and making them willing to receive it. To offer heaven and then to prevail on man to accept it, is at once an act of God's omnipotence, and of his mercy.

Thus faith, which appears to be so easy, is of all things the most difficult:—which seems to be so common, is of all things most rare. To consider how reluctant the human heart adopts this principle; how it evades and stipulates; how it procrastinates, even when it does not pointedly reject; how ingenious its subterfuges, how specious its pretences; and then to deny that faith is a supernatural gift, is to reject the concurring testimony of reason, of Scripture, of daily observation, of actual experience.

St. Paul frequently intimates that faith is never a solitary attribute: he never separates it from humility, it being indeed the parent of that self-abasing grace. He also implies that faith is not, as some represent it, a disorderly, but a regulating principle, when he speaks of *the law of faith*, of the obedience of faith. Faith and repentance are the two qualities inseparably linked in the work of our salvation; repentance teaching us to abhor ourselves for sin,—faith, to go out of ourselves for righteousness. Holiness and charity Paul exhibits as its inseparable concomitants, or rather its necessary productions, their absence clearly demonstrating the want of the generating principle. May we not hence infer that wherever faith is seen not in his company, she is an impostor.

Of the great 'mysteries of godliness' enumerated by Paul in his Epistle to Timothy, he shows by his arrangement of the five particulars that compose them, that *God believed on in the world* is the climax of this astonishing process.'* And it may be deduced from his general writings that the reason why so many do not more anxiously labour for eternal happiness, is, because they do not practically believe it. The importance of this fundamental principle is so great, that our spiritual enemy is not so perseveringly bent on deterring us from this duty, or detaching us from that virtue, as on shaking the foundation of our faith. He knows if he can undermine this strong hold, slighter impediments will give way. As the first practical instance of human rebellion sprung from unbelief, so all subsequent obedience, to be available, must spring from faith.

Saint Paul shows faith to be a *victorious* principle. There is no other quality which can enable us to overcome the world. Faith is the only successful competitor with secular allurement. The world offers things great in human estimation, but it is the property of this grace to make great things look little; it effects this purpose by reducing them to their real dimensions. Nothing but faith can show us the emptiness of this world's glory at the best, because nothing else views it in perpetual contrast with the blessedness of heaven; nothing else can give us such a feeling conviction of its brevity at the longest, as that principle which habitually measures it with eternity. It holds out the only light which shows a Christian that the universe has no bribe worth his acceptance, if it must be obtained at the price of his conscience, at the risk of his soul.

Saint Paul demonstrates in his own instance, that faith is not only a regulating and conquering, but a *transforming* grace. It altered the whole constitution of his mind. It did not dry up the tide of his strong affections, but diverted them into a channel entirely different. To say all in a word, he was a living exemplification of the great Scripture doctrine which he taught—faith made him, emphatically, *a new man*. Thus his life as well as his writings prove that faith is an *operating* principle, a strenuous, influential, vigilant grace. If it teach that self-abasement which makes us lowly in our own eyes, it communicates that watchfulness which preserves us from the contamination of sin, a dread of every communication which may pollute. Its disciple is active as well as humble. Love is the instrument by which it works. But that love of God with which it fills the heart, is not maintained there in indolent repose, but quickened for the service of man. Genuine faith does not infuse a piety which is unprofitable to others, but draws it out in incessant desires and aims to promote the general good.

The Apostle knew that the faith of many is rather drowsy than insincere, rather slothful than hypocritical; that they dread the consequences it involves more than the profession it requires. He is therefore always explicit, always mindful to append the effect to the cause. Hence we hear so much from him and the other apostles of the *fruits* of faith, of adding to faith *virtue:* and it is worthy of remark, that in the roll of Saints,—those spirits of renown in the ancient church, to which allusion has been made,—the faith of every one is illustrated, not only by some splendid act, but by a life of obedience.

We may talk as holily as Paul himself, and by a delusion not uncommon, by the very holiness of our talk, may deceive our own souls; but we may rest assured that where charity is not the dominant grace, faith is not the inspiring principle. Thus, by examining our lives, not our discourse, we shall 'prove whether we are in faith.'

Though a genuine faith is peremptory in its decision and resolute in its obedience, yet it deeply feels the source from whence it is derived. In that memorable instance of Abraham's faith, in the very act, instead of valuing himself on the strength of his conviction, *he gave glory to God;* and it is obvious that the reason why faith is selected as the prime condition of our justification, is, because it is a grace which, beyond all others, gives to God the entire glory; that it is the only attribute which subducts nothing for, derives nothing from self. Why are christian and believer convertible terms, if this living principle be no ground-work of his character. If, then,

* 1 Tim. chap. ii.

it supplies his distinguishing appellation, should it not be his governing spirit of action?

Paul is a wonderful instance of the power of this principle. That he should be so entirely carried out of his natural character; that he who, by his persecuting spirit, courted the favour of the intolerant Sanhedrim, should be brought to act in direct opposition to their prejudices, supported by no human protection, sustained alone by the grace of Him whom he had stoutly opposed; that his confidence in God should rise in proportion to his persecutions from man: that the whole bent of his soul should be set directly contrary to his natural propensities, the whole force of his mind and actions be turned in full opposition to his temper, education, society, and habits; that not only his affections should be diverted into a new channel, but that his judgment and understanding should sail in the newly directed current; that his bigotry should be transformed into candour, his fierceness into gentleness, his untameable pride into charity, his intolerance into meekness,—can all this be accounted for on any principle inherent in human nature, on any principle uninspired by the Spirit of God?

After this instance,—and, blessed be God, the instance, though superior, is not solitary; the change, though miraculous in this case, is not less certain in others,—shall the doctrine so exemplified continue to be the butt of ridicule? While the scoffing infidel virtually puts the renovation of the human heart nearly on a footing with the metamorphoses of Ovid, or the transmigrations of Pythagoras; let not the timid Christian be discouraged: let not his faith be shaken, though he may find that the principle to which he has been taught to trust his eternal happiness, is considered as false by him who has not examined into its truth; that the change, of which the sound believer exhibits so convincing an evidence, is derided as absurd by the philosophical sceptic, treated as chimerical by the superficial reasoner, or silently suspected as incredible by the decent moralist.

CHAP. V.

The morality of Saint Paul.

Christianity was a second creation. It completed the first order of things, and introduced a new one of its own, not subversive but perfective of the original. It produced an entire revolution in the condition of man, and accomplished a change in the state of the world, which all its confederated power, wit, and philosophy, not only could not effect, but could not even conceive. It threw such a preponderating weight into the scale of morals, by the superinduction of the new principle of faith in a Redeemer, as rendered the hitherto insupportable trials of the afflicted, comparatively light. It gave strength to weakness, spirit to action, motive to virtue, certainty to doubt, patience to suffering, light to darkness, life to death.

It is a rule of Aristotle, that principles and conclusions must always be within the sphere of the same science; that error will be inevitable, while men examine the conclusions of one science by the principles of another. He observes, that it is therefore absurd for a mathematician, whose conclusions ought to be grounded on demonstration, to ground them on the probabilities of the rhetorician.

May not this rule be transferred from the sciences of the schools to the science of morals? Will not the worldly moralist err, by drawing his conclusions as to the morality of a serious Christian from the principles of the worldly school; not being at all able to judge of the principles, of which the religious man's morals are the result.

But in our application of this rule, the converse of the proposition will not hold good; for the real Christian, being aware of the principles of worldly morality, expects that his conclusions should grow out of his principles, and in this opinion he seldom errs.

Christian writings have made innumerable converts to morality; but mere moral works have never made one convert to religion. They do not exhibit an originating principle. Morality is not the instrument but the effect of conversion. It cannot say, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' But when Christ has given life, then morality, by the activity of the inspiring motive, gives the surest evidence of renovated vitality, and exhibits the most unequivocal symptoms, not only of spiritual life, but of vigorous health.

Saint Paul is sometimes represented not merely as the greatest of the Apostles,—this is readily granted,—but virtually as being almost exclusively great. Is not this just ascription of superior excellence, however, too commonly limited to the doctrinal part of his compositions, and is not the consummate moral perfection which both his writings and his character so consistently display, sometimes, if not overlooked, yet placed in the back ground?

Though he did more for the moral accomplishment of the human character than has ever been effected by any other man; though he laboured more abundantly than any other writer, to promote practical religion; yet polemical divinity on the one side, is too much disposed to claim him as her immediate champion; and then in order to make good her claim on the other, to assign to him a subordinate station in the ranks of sacred and moral writers.

Now the fact is, that all the prophets and apostles, aggregately, are not so abundant in ethical instruction, nor is the detail of moral conduct in any of them so minutely unfolded, or so widely ramified, as in the works of Saint Paul. We may indeed, venture to assert, that David and our apostles are almost the only Scripture characters, of whom we have such full-length pictures. And for this reason; what was left imperfect in their delineation by their respective historians, is completely filled up by their own compositions. The narratives may be said to exhibit their shape and features; their own writings have added the grace of countenance, the force of expression, and the warmth of colouring.

It furnishes a complete answer to those who oppose the doctrines of grace, on the supposed ground of their encouraging sin; that, as there never was a man who expanded and illustrated those doctrines so fully, so there never was one whose character and compositions exhibit a more consistent and high-toned morality.

Like his sacred precursors, Paul always equally maintains the freeness of grace, and the necessity of holiness. The character of faith is not lowered by insisting that holy practice, which is nothing more than the exercises and consequences of faith, is the sign of its reality. Action, and motion, and speech are not life, but they are the most unequivocal signs of life. Life evidences itself in them; and we do not disparage the principle when we infer its effects, and estimate their value.

We sometimes hear in conversation Saint James set up as the champion of moral virtue against Saint Paul, the bold asserter of doctrines. For these two eminent apostles, there has been invented an opposition, which, as it never existed in their minds, so it cannot be traced in their writings. Without detracting from the perfect ethics of Saint James, may we not be allowed to insist, that Paul, his coadjutor, not his rival, is equally zealous in the inculcation of practice; only running it up more uniformly into its principle; descending more deeply into its radical stock, connecting it more invariably with its motive. It is worth observing, in confirmation of their similarity of views, and perfect agreement in sentiment, that Saint Paul and Saint James derive their instance of the principle for which each is contending, from the same example, the patriarch Abraham.

So far is Paul from undervaluing virtue, that he expressly declares 'that God will render to every man according to his deeds.' So peremptory on this head, that he not only directs men to do good works, but to 'maintain' them; so desirous to establish the act into a habit, that they must not only perform them, but be 'careful' in the performance; so far from thinking, that, after his conversion, man was to be an inactive recipient of grace, that he not only enjoins us to be 'always abounding in the work of the Lord,' but assigns the very reason for it —the reception of grace; 'forasmuch as ye know that your labour will not be in vain in the Lord.' He repeatedly presses on them perseverance, and perseverance is no fanatical symptom. His documents enforce a religion equable, consistent, progressive. This mode of instruction is no fruit of a heated brain, no child of emotion, no vapour of impulse, no effect of fancy.

Not to instance those ample tables of Christian practice, the twelfth of Romans, the fifth of Thessalonians, the whole Epistle of Titus, and the two last chapters to the Ephesians,—every part of his writings either deduces holy practice from some corresponding principle; or else, after he has been enforcing a system of doctrine, he habitually infers a system of morals growing out of it, inseparable from it. Indeed, throughout the whole of the last named Epistle, into which the very essence of Gospel doctrines is infused and compressed, all the social, personal, and relative duties are specifically detailed and enjoined:—the affection of husbands, the submission of wives, the tenderness of parents, the obedience of children, the subordination and fidelity of servants, economy of time, hands to be kept from stealing, 'a tongue from evil speaking,' a body maintained in 'temperance, soberness, and chastity;' a guarded conversation, a gravity of carriage; the very decencies of life are all proposed with a minuteness which will scarcely bear a comparison but with his own catalogue of virtues in a kindred Epistle: 'Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

So far from seeking to subvert the moral law, he takes unwearied pains to confirm it: but he fixes it on its true basis; while he denies its justifying power, he 'establishes' its importance as a rule. He vindicates its value, not as a covenant for salvation, but as a measure of conduct. In no instance, however light, does he deny the obligation of believers to maintain a steadfast adherence to it, or discountenance, a minute observance of it. He not only shows that every sin is to be abandoned, but the contrary virtue adopted: and, though one of the fathers observes, that 'a vice sometimes gives place where a virtue does not take it,' yet the only certain symptom of the expulsion of a bad quality is the substitution of its opposite. And no man ever more forcibly condemned an empty profession than Paul: no one more severely reprobated a dead faith, no one more unequivocally commended 'not the hearers, but the doers of the law.'

He proves unanswerably that the doctrine of grace is so far from being hostile to sound practice, that it is the only source from which all legitimate virtue springs;—so far from slackening diligence, that it gives vigour to its activity; —so far from making vigilance superfluous, that its constant language is, *Watch*;—so far from limiting to a favoured few the exhortation, that it makes it universal; 'What I say unto you, I say unto *all*—watch!'

In directing his converts to virtuous deeds, he never fails to include the spirit in the act;—they must be *ready* to distribute, *willing* to communicate. He never fails to show, that the characteristic and essence of all goodness is the desire of pleasing God. In other words, the action must be the fruit of love to Him. Qualities *merely amiable* are originally without that principle, and possessed even by animals, and possessed in a very high degree, as affection for their offspring, fidelity to their masters, gratitude for notice.

Paul, like his blessed Lord, is never so emphatically indignant against any of the signs of hypocrisy in professors, as against sinful practice. Like Him he is frequent in the enumeration of vices which he solemnly proclaims amount to an exclusion from heaven. Holy practice is indeed the only sign to the world of the sincerity of a Christian, and in a good measure is a sign to himself. It is the principal evidence which will regulate the retributive sentence of the last day.—Paul therefore

calls that day 'the *revelation* of the righteous judgment of God.' He does not call it the day of his forming the judgment, but of his declaring it. God, who witnessed the act when it was done, and the motive which impelled it, wants himself no such evidence to assist his decision, but he uses it to manifest to men and angels his own strict justice. 'In that awful day,' says an eminent divine, 'the judge will not examine men as to their experiences, he will not set every one to tell the story of his conversion, but he will bring forth his works.'*

How acceptable, even in the ears of the most thoughtless, would that proclamation sound, *the grace of God bringeth salvation*, were it unaccompanied by the moral power ascribed to it, that of teaching us to deny our sensual appetites! How many would give a cheap assent to the principle, were it not clogged with such an encumbering consequence. Those who insist, that our salvation is effected by works, would gladly adopt faith as a speculative notion, instead of the inconvenient evidences which this self-denying grace involves.

One would imagine, that some who so loudly insist that we shall be saved by works, must mean works of supererogation, and that they depended for salvation on the transfer of the superfluity of the merits of others to themselves; for it is remarkable, that *they* trust their future bliss most confidently to good works, who have the slenderest portion of their own to produce.

The Apostle is perpetually combating the fatal doctrine of those who insinuate that the freedom of the Gospel is a freedom from moral restraint. He describes it, indeed, as a deliverance from the sentence, but not from the precepts, of the law. No one even more unremittingly opposed those who represent the constant inculcation of holy practice as an infringement of the liberty of a Christian. He perpetually demonstrates the necessity of a determinate rule of duty, without which even that love, which is sometimes pleaded as an apology for the neglect of duty,—that love, which is, indeed, the genuine source of all acceptable performance,—might be lowered into a vagrant, indefinite, disorderly principle. A religion, destitute of faith and love, is not the religion of Christ: a religion which furnishes no certain standard of conduct, is not the religion of the Gospel.

Saint Paul accordingly animadverts severely on those who presume to convert the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, into a pretence for licentious conduct. He strenuously refutes the charge, by intimating, that the New Covenant enforces holiness of life, even more than the Old, and enforces it on more engaging motives. The Law deters from sin by denunciations: the Gospel invites to goodness by the most winning persuasions; God so *loved* the world, that he gave his Son to save it. The Law shows man the danger of sin, and pronounces its punishment: the Gospel performs the higher act of love, it delivers him from its power. It is a quality ascribed to the love of Christ, that it 'constraineth;' it compels us, as it were, to be compassionate. What can make us so tender to others as the experience of God's goodness to ourselves? Who is so ready to show mercy as he who has received it?

Saint Paul derives all duties from this love of God in Christ as their foundation. All the motives to right action, all the arguments for holiness of life, are drawn from this source; all the lines of duty converge to this centre. If Paul censures, he points to this only spring of hope; if he laments, he turns to this only true consolation; if he insists that the *Grace of God hath appeared*, he points to its practical object, 'teaching us to live soberly, righteously, and godly.' When he determines to know nothing but his Saviour, and even him under the degrading circumstance of crucifixion, he includes in that knowledge all the religious and moral benefits of which it is susceptible.

They who contend that the Gospel is only a scheme of morals, struggle hard to keep down the compact to their own depressed standard. They will not allow of a grain or a scruple 'beyond the bond,' but insist, that whatever is not specifically commanded, is superfluous; what is above their own pitch is unnecessary. If they allow that it is sublime, they insist that it is impracticable. If they allow that the *love*, *peace*, and *joy* of the apostle, are desirable, they do not desire them as *fruits of the Spirit*, as signs of acceptance. The interior principle, those views which take in the very depths of the heart, as well as the surface of life,—any practical use of these penetrating truths, they consider as something which the enthusiastic reader does not find, but make.

The mere social and political virtues are made for this world. Here they have their origin, their use, and their reward. All the motives to various practice, not derived from the hope of future blessedness, will be inefficient. There is a powerful obligation to 'perfect holiness' to those who do not perfect it in the fear 'of God.' Grace will not thrive abundantly in that heart which does not believe it to be the seat of glory.

The moralist of our Apostle is not merely a man possessed of agreeable qualities, of some social and civil virtues, of generosity and good nature, qualities excellent as far as they go, and which, as a means to the good order of society, can scarcely be too much valued; but these qualities a man may possess, without having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, without desiring 'to live for him who died for him.' Such qualities will gain him credit, but that very credit may endanger his salvation, if worldly esteem make him rest satisfied, without the 'honour which cometh from God.' The purity, sublimity, and consistency of Saint Paul's requirements every where manifest that his moral man is not merely a disciple of Antoninus or Epictetus, but a liege subject of the Messiah's spiritual kingdom.

Paul shows, that the humbling doctrines of the Cross are so far from lowering the tone of moral obligation, that they raise the standard of practical virtue to an elevation totally unknown under any other mode of instruction. But there is a tendency in the heart of man, in his natural state, to rebel against these doctrines, even while he professes himself an ad-

* Edwards on Religious Affections.

vocate for virtue; to set up the virtue which he presumes that he possesses, against religion, to which he is chiefly hostile for the very elevation which it gives to virtue: this, more than the doctrines, and even than the mysteries of revelation, is the real cause of his hostility.

We have known persons, when pressed on the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, think to get rid of the argument, by declaring that they did not pretend to understand Saint Paul; that, for their part, they were quite satisfied with Micah's religion: 'To do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God,' was enough for them. In what they call this comfortable, and reasonable, and practicable scheme of religion, they are little aware what strictness is involved, what integrity, what charity, what holiness. They little think how nearly the Prophet's religion approached that of the Apostle. There is in fact no difference between them, but such as necessarily arises out of the two dispensations under which they lived. To walk humbly with God, we must believe in the revelation of his Son, and consequently adopt the principle he enjoins: we must adopt every doctrine, and believe every mystery. To walk humbly with God, is a principle which stretches to the bounds of the whole universe of revelation.

More men are indebted to Christianity for their morality, than are willing to confess the obligation. It communicates a secret and unacknowledged infection. Living under a public recognition of Christianity, under Christian laws, and in Christian society, causes many a proud heart to believe more than it cares to own, and to do more good than the man is willing to ascribe to the faith which, if it does not actually influence *his* mind, has made right actions so common, that not to do them is dishonourable. Others, who do not appear to live under the direct illumination of the Gospel, have yet the benefit of its refracted rays, which, if the conveyance is too imperfect to communicate religious warmth, yet diffuses sufficient light to point the way to many moral duties.

We are apt to call men good, because they are without certain bad qualities. But this is not only not knowing religion, it is not knowing human nature. All vices are not affinities; of course the very indulgence of one vice is not seldom an exclusion of another, as covetousness avoids profligacy, and ambition expels indolence; but though they are natural antipathies, they all spring from the same source; the same fountain of corrupt nature feeds both.

Nor does the goodness of Saint Paul's moral man consist merely in abstaining from wicked actions; nor merely in filling the external duties of his profession. While he is active in business, he must be fervent in Spirit. While transacting the ordinary affairs of life, he must be serving the Lord. In worldly moralists, the excessive pursuit of business, as well as of pleasure, leaves a clinging to it in the thoughts, and almost exclusive attachment to it in the heart, long after the actual engagement has ceased, the hankering mind continues to act over again the scenes of its interest, of its ambition, or of its amusement.

Again, the worldly moralist, while he practises some virtues, is indifferent to others. He is temperate, perhaps, but he is ambitious. He is diligent, but he is sordid. Whereas Christian morality as taught by St. Paul hangs as it were in clusters; every virtue issuing from *his* principles touches on other virtues at so many points, that no man possesses one in perfection who does not possess many, who does not at least desire to possess all; while the Divine Spirit, pervading like the sap every fibre of the soul, strengthens the connexion of its graces, and infuses holy aims into the whole character.

We have employed the term *morality* in compliance with common usage; but adopted in the worldly sense, it gives but an imperfect idea of the Apostle's meaning. His preceptive passages are encircled with a kind of glory; they are illuminated with a beam from heaven; they proceed from the Spirit of God, are produced by faith in Him. There is every where that beautiful intermixture of motive and action, that union of the cause and the effect, the faith and its fruits, that uniform balance of the principle and the produce, which render these Epistles an exhaustless treasury of practical wisdom, as well as an imperishable record of Divine Grace.

Saint Paul every where runs up the stream to the spring. The government he inculcates is spiritual. Not content to recommend the obedience of the life, he brings the very thoughts and desires under controul. He traces up the act to the temper which produces it. He dwells more on the spirit of the world than on its actual offences. He knew that many would reprobate bad actions, who do not seek that spirit which would prevent their generating. He knew that men judge soundly enough on questions in which they have no bias from interest or appetite. For one who believes that to be 'carnally-minded is death,' twenty believe in the miraculous gift of tongues, and even in the doctrine of the Trinity, because they fancy, that neither of these trenches on their purse, or their pleasure, or their vain projects.

What Paul calls 'doing by nature the things contained in the law,' and 'a man being a law unto himself,' we frequently see illustrated in some well bred and highly cultivated minds. They have a strong sense of honour and integrity; to this sense their credit and their comfort require they should live up. The natural make of their mind, perhaps, is liberal; from education they have imbibed noble sentiments: they have adopted a system of equity which they would think it dishonourable to violate; they are generous and humane; but in matters of self-indulgence they are not scrupulous; in subduing their inclinations, in abstinence from some one governing desire or impetuous appetite,—in all this they come short; to all this their rule does not extend. Their conduct, therefore, though amiable, and useful, and creditable, yet is not the 'obedience of faith;' these good qualities might have been exercised, had Christianity never existed; this is not bringing the practice, much less *the thoughts, into the captivity of Christ.* This man is a law unto himself, and acts consistently enough with this self-imposed legislation.

Even if no religion had ever existed, if a

Deity did not exist,—for the reference is not to religion, not to the will of the Deity,—such morality would be acceptable to society, because to society it is profitable. But how can action be pleasing to God in which there is no purpose of blessing him? How can any conduct be acceptable to God, to whom it renders no homage, to whom it gives no glory?

Scripture abounds with every motive to obedience, both rational and spiritual. But it would achieve but half its work, had it stopped there. As peaceable creatures, we require not only inducements to obedience, but a heart, and a power, and a will to obey; assistance is as necessary as motives; power as indispensable as precept;—all which requisites are not only promised by the word, but conferred by the Spirit of God.

CHAP. VI.

The Disinterestedness of Saint Paul.

The perfection of the Christian character does not so much consist in this excellence, or that talent, or the other virtue; in the performance of some right action, or the abstinence from some wrong one, as in *the determination of the whole soul for God.* This generous surrender of self, whether of the sensual or of the intellectual self is the unequivocal test of a heart consecrated by man to his Maker. He has no bye-ends, no secret reserves. His intention is single, his way is straight forward; he keeps his end in view without deflection, and he pursues it without weariness.

Saint Paul and his associates were the first moral instructors who preached not themselves. Perhaps there is scarcely a more striking proof of the grandeur of his spirit, than his indifference to popularity. This is an elevation of character, which not only no Pagan sage has reached, but which not every Christian teacher has been found to attain.

This successful apostle was so far from placing himself at the head of a sect, that he took pains to avoid it. In some subsequent instructors, this vanity was probably the first seed of heresy; the sound of Ebionites and Marcionites would as much gratify the ear of the founders, as bringing over proselytes to their opinions would delight their feelings. Paul would have rejected with horror any such distinction. He who earnestly sought to glorify his Master, would naturally abase himself. With a holy indignation he asks, 'What then is Paul, and what is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?' He points out to them the littleness of such exclusive fondness in men, who had such great objects in view—'overvalue not Paul or Apollos as yours, *for all things are yours.*'

It is impossible not to stop a moment, in order to notice the fine structure of the period to which these words are an introduction. It would be difficult to find a more finished climax: 'Let no man glory in men; for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; or the world, or life, or death; or things present or things to come; all are yours, and your are Christ's and Christ is God's.*

Knowing the proneness of human nature to this party spirit, he takes pains to prevent excessive individual attachments. There is no instance of a man so distinguished, so little distinguishing himself. He chooses to merge himself in the general cause, to sink himself in the mass of faithful ministers.—This is particularly evident in the beginning of many of his Epistles, by his humility in attaching, to his own, some name of far inferior note, as his associate in the work;—'Paul and Sosthenes'—'Paul and Sylvanus'—'Timotheus our brother;'—and in writing to the Thessalonians, he connects both the latter names with his own.

He laboured to make the people bear in mind that the apostles were the disseminators, not the authors, of the faith which they preached. Miraculous as his conversion had been, superior as were his endowments, favoured as he was by Divine inspiration, he not only did not assume, but he rejected, any distinction, and only included himself among the teachers of their common Christianity. Thus he bequeathed to his successors a standing pattern of humility, and of the duty of ascribing their talents, their application, and their success, to him, from whom whatever advantages they possess, are derived.

Saint Paul did not rank, on the one hand, with those liberal modern philosophers, who assert that virtue is its own reward; nor on the other, with those abstracted mystics, who profess an unnatural disinterestedness, and a superhuman disdain of any recompence but that which they find in the pure love of God. He was not above accepting heaven, not for any works of righteousness which he had done, but as the free gift of God through the righteousness that had been wrought for him. He was not too proud and independent to confess, that the nearness of heavenly glory was with him a most animating principle.

This hope cheered his fainting spirit; this prospect not only regulated, but almost annihilated his sense of suffering. Invisible things were made so clear to the eye of faith; remote things were brought so near to one, who always kept up in his mind a comparative estimate of the brevity of this afflicted life, and the duration of eternal happiness; faith so made the future present; love so made the labour light; the earnest of the Spirit was given him in such a measure;—that mortality seemed, even here, to be swallowed up of life. His full belief in the immediate presence of God in that world in which he was assured, that light, purity, holiness, and happiness would be enjoyed in their most consummate perfection, not only sustained his hope, but exhilirated his heart.

If it does not support *us* under our inferior trials in the same manner, it is because we have rather a nominal than a practical faith, rather an assenting than an obeying conviction; it is because our eyes are not fixed on the same objects, nor our hearts warmed with the same affections; it is because our attention is directed so sparingly to that Being, and that state, to

* 1 Corinth. iii. 22.

which his was supremely devoted. Ought we to complain, that we enjoy not the same supports, nor the same consolations, while we do not put ourselves in the same way to obtain them?

But though Paul was no disciple of that metaphysical theology, which makes such untaught distinctions, as to separate our love of God from any regard to our own beatitude; though he might have been considered a selfish man, by either of the classes to whom allusion has been made, yet true disinterestedness was eminently his characteristic. Another instance of a human being so entirely devoid of selfishness, one who never took his own ease, or advantage, or safety, or credit, into the account, cannot be found. If he considered his own sufferings, he considered them for the sake of his friends. 'Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation.' The only joy he seemed to derive, when he was 'pressed out of measure, above strength,' was, that others might be comforted and encouraged by his sufferings. So also of his consolations; the principal joy which he derived from them was, that others might be animated by them. This anxiety for the proficiency of his converts, in preference to his own safety; his disposition to regard every object in due subjection to the great design of his ministry; his humble, vigilant care, while exulting in the hope of an eternal crown, that he might 'not himself be cast away;'—form, in combination with the rest of his conduct, a character which we must allow has not only no superior, but no parallel.

The union of generosity and self-denial,—and without the one the other is imperfect,—was peculiarly exemplified in our apostle.—His high-minded independence on man had nothing of the monkish pride of poverty, for he knew 'how to abound;' nor was it the worldly pusillanimous dread of it, for he 'knew how to want.'

In vindicating the right of the ecclesiastical body to an equitable provision, as a just requital of their labours, he nobly renounces all claim to any participation for himself.—'*I have used none of these things!*' This wise and dignified abstinence in the original formation of a church, which must be founded, before provision can be made for its continuance, while it maintained the dignity of his own disinterestedness, enabled him with the better grace, and more powerful effect, to plead the legitimate claims of her ministers; and to insist, that it was the duty of the people to supply their temporal things to those from whom they received ther spiritual things. While he himself refused to claim them, lest it should be made a pretence for hindering the Gospel, he yet looked forward with an eye of kindness and justice, in thus stipulating, as it were, for the comfort of the Christian ministers to the end of the world.

In a long expostulatory argument, illustrated by a variety of analogous instances, he shows the propriety of a provision being made for those who dedicated themselves to the spiritual instruction of others:—the warrior engaged in the defence of his country is supported at the public expense; the planter by the produce of his vineyard; the feeder of a flock by the milk of his flock; the agriculturist by the profits of his plough.

He strengthens his argument by an allusion to a humane practice in the old law, by which even the ox was allowed to participate in that plenty which his labour assisted to procure; then, by a sudden generous interjection,—'Doth God take care for oxen?' he intimates that this provision of mercy for the beast, was emblematical of this justice,—for it scarcely amounted to mercy,—which ought to secure to every minister a fair remuneration for the sacrifice he has made of ease and profit, by addicting himself to the service of the altar.

After, however, having declared that he renounced all reward for himself, fearing that this assurance might be construed into an insinuation of his wish to receive the emolument which he pretended to refuse, with a noble disdain of so mean an expedient, he protests that it would be better for him to die of want, rather than, by receiving pecuniary recompence, to rob himself of his honest claim to the consciousness of disinterested services.

Saint Paul's conduct in these instances affords something of the same fine climax in action, with that which Jesus expressed in words, when he sent to the Baptist the proofs of his divinity. After enumerating his miracles of love, he closes with declaring, as the highest possible instance of that love, *that the Gospel was preached*—but to what class? to the poor! From the words of Christ, turn to the life of Paul. The persecution of his enemies, the fatigue of his travels, the falsehood of his brethren, the labour of instructing so many nations, of converting so many cities, of founding so many churches,—what is his relaxation from such labours, what his refreshment from such perils, what his descent from such heights?—Working with his own hands for his daily bread, and for the relief of the poor. The profane critic may call this the art of sinking, the Christian will deem it the noblest point of elevation. Might not the apostle well say, 'Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ?'

How has the world stood in just admiration of the generous conduct of Cincinnatus! Tired with the fatigues of war, and satiated with the glories of conquest, he very rationally, and (as he refused all reward) it must be owned very disinterestedly, withdrew to his country house, from which he had been reluctantly torn. He withdrew to enjoy, in the bosom of his family, the advantages of agriculture and the pleasures of retirement. To such a retreat would Paul have flown with delight, had he not known that, for him it was not a duty. He, unlike the Dictator, had no intervals of unmolested claim; it was not in the quiet of repose, but in the very midst of perils and of persecutions, that he laboured for his own support.

It cannot be denied, that his whole consistent practice furnished this sure criterion of a faithful minister,—that he enjoined no self-denial, preached no mortification, recommended no exertion to others, of which he gave not himself a shining example. While he pointed out to his associates the duty of 'approving themselves ministers of God in afflictions, in necessities, in

distresses,' he was not himself *lying on a bed of roses;* he was not making light of sorrows, of which he was not personally partaking; he did not deal out orders for the patient endurance of sufferings the bitterness of which he had not tasted. He had largely shared in the stripes and imprisonments which it was possible some of his followers might be speedily called to endure.

At the same time, he furnishes them with cautions drawn from his own invariable prudence, when he exhorted them to *give no offence.* This was not altogether to avoid personal discredit, though that should be carefully guarded against, so much as to preserve the character of religion itself from the obloquy she would sustain from the faults of her disciples. His great object why *the ministry should not be blamed,* was because he knew how ineffectual all teaching would be rendered, if the teacher committed the faults he reprehended, or even exercised a religious vocation in an imprudent manner.

In another place, after recapitulating some of the hardships which himself and his companions were suffering, up to the very moment when he was describing them,—their hunger and thirst, their nakedness and buffeting, deprived of domestic comforts, destitute of a settled home; having shown what was their treatment, he proceeds to show what was their temper under it: —*Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.* This is indeed practical Christianity!

After enumerating the trials to which they may be exposed, he sets over against them a catalogue of the qualities by which they should be distinguished,—*pureness, knowledge, kindness;* thus encouraging them to patience by the integrity of their motives; and to the adornment of their calling, by the skilfulness and affection with which they exercised it He tempers their sorrows and difficulties, by interspersing with the recital those Divine consolations, from which alone genuine cheerfulness can be derived.

In this enumeration he had not to rack his invention for precedents; he had only to make a transcript of the state of his own mind, and the tenor of his own practice, to give them a complete delineation of the ministerial character. While he encourages them to perseverance by the success which might attend their labours, he prepares them also to expect reproach; mingling *good and evil report* as the probable lot of every devoted servant of Christ.

When he was setting out from Ephesus for Jerusalem, 'bound in the spirit, not knowing the things that should befal him,' the indefinite yet certain anticipation of calamity which he expressed, might have been interpreted into the pusillanimous forebodings of his own apprehensive mind: he guards against this suspicion by informing us, it was by the unerring inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he was assured, 'that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city;' so that he knew infallibly, wherever he went, it was only a change of place, not of peril. Yet was this conviction so far from arresting his purpose, so far from inclining him to hesitate, or not to persist in the path of duty because it was the path of danger, that his mighty faith converted duty into choice, elevated duty into joy. Hear his triumphant proclamation: 'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.'

It is not the nature of Christianity to convert a man of sense into a driveller; if it make him self-abased in the sight of God, and in his own eyes, it does not oblige him to a renunciation of his just claims in civil society, nor to a base abjection in the sight of men. He is not desirous of honours which do not belong to him, but he does not despise those to which he has a lawful claim. The character of Paul, like the religion he taught, is manly, rational, ingenuous.

This combination of dignity with humility, he uniformly presents to us. He always humbles, but never disparages himself. He, who on one occasion was 'the least of all saints,' was, on another, 'not a whit behind the chiefest of them.' He that was 'not worthy to be called an apostle,' would yet magnify his apostleship. He who would patiently endure injury and reproach, yet refused to be scourged contrary to law. He, who was illegally imprisoned at Philippi, accepted not the deliverance till the magistrates themselves came in person to release him, —a resolution not only due to his own innocence, but probably intended also to render the magistrates afraid of proceeding unjustly against other Christians. He, who could submit to live by the labour of his own hands, and to receive charity in his sickness, would vindicate his civil title to respect, and not only urge his right of Roman citizenship, but press his peculiar ground of superiority over the officer who would have contended with him, by declaring that his own freedom was not a purchase, but an inheritance. He who determined to know nothing but 'Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' could assert, when it became proper, his liberal education under a master in Israel. He, who was now lying at the foot of the cross, avowed that he had been bred at the feet of Gamaliel. He who was beating down the pride of 'gifts' in the assuming Corinthians, scrupled not to declare his own superiority in this very article, yet with an exclusive ascription of the gift to the Giver. 'I thank my God, that I speak with more tongues than you all.'*

To those who understand what Bishop Horseley calls 'the paradoxes of Christianity,' it will be perfectly intelligible, that one, who was so feelingly alive to the perception of sin, as to deplore that 'when he would do good, evil was present with him,' could also, in the integrity of his heart, boldly appeal to the Thessalonians for the purity of his own conduct, and that of his companions—'you know how holily, and justly, and unblameably we have lived among you.'

He was aware that contentions about practices and opinions comparatively insignificant, were generally the most vehemently and uncharitably carried on by men who are the most cold and indifferent in the defence of truths of the most

* Acts, ch. 16.

awful moment. Inflexible himself in every thing which was of vital importance, yet accommodating in trivial matters, about which men of narrow views pertinaciously contend, he shaped the course of his usefulness to the winding current of life, and the flexure of circumstances; and was ever on the watch to see how, by giving way in things indifferent, he might gain men to the great cause which he lived only to promote.

Never was any sentiment more completely perverted, than that which is so expressive of the condescension that distinguishes his character,—*I am all things to all men.* The Latitudinarian in principle or in morals, who would not consider Paul's authority as paramount on any other occasion, eagerly pleads this text to justify his own accommodation to every thing that is tempting in interest, or seductive in appetite. This sentiment, which proceeded from a candour the most amiable, was, in the apostle, always governed by an integrity the most unbending.

To what purpose did he make use of this maxim? 'That he might by all means save some.' Let those who justify its adoption by the sanction of Paul, employ it to the same end to which he employed it. But is it not frequently carried to a conceding length, to which he would never have carried it, to answer *any* purpose; and is not the end itself often such as he would not have sought, even by the best means? To the perversion of this sentiment the fashionable doctrine of expediency may be imputed,—a doctrine not more corrupt in its principle, and dangerous in its results, than opposite to the whole bent and current of the apostles' views, as developed in his writings and in his practice.

That hollow maxim, of *doing evil that good may come*, had indeed been adopted by some of the wisest Pagan legislators. Not only the prudent Numa pretended to Divine communications with his inspiring goddess, in order that his laws might be received with more reverence; even the open hearted conqueror of Carthage used to enter the Capitol alone, under pretence of consulting the gods, that whatever enterprises he wished to recommend to the people, they might believe them to be directed and approved by their deities.—But nothing impedes the march of truth more than the offered assistance of falsehood. Nothing is more injurious to a good cause than the attempt to help it forward with fictitious or even doubtful additions. Some of the best cases,—cases corroborated by a thousand indubitable facts,—have been injured for a time, by the detection of petty instances of misrepresentation, or mistake, or aggravation in ill-judging advocates.

After the example of the illustrious Romans above recited, but with far less excuse, even some weak Christians, in the second century, fancying that deceit might succeed where truth had failed, attempted by forgery to supply the deficiencies of Scripture. Spurious Sybilline verses, under the reign of one of the Antonines, were imposed by fraud upon folly, as prophecies of Christ, pretending to be as old as the Deluge. The attempt to mend perfection never answers.

To these political impostures what a contrast does Saint Paul exhibit at once in his writings and his life!—In his writings he declares, in one short sentence, of all such principles, 'their condemnation is just.' In his life he *suffered* evil to extremity, that good might be produced; but never, under the most alluring pretence, *did* evil, or connived at it. He drew in no convert, by displaying only the pleasant side of Christianity. To bring forward the doctrine of the cross was his first object; though, since his time, to keep them out of sight has sometimes been thought a more prudent measure. But the political wisdom of the Jesuitical missionaries failed as completely as the simple integrity of the apostle succeeded.

His arguments, it is true, were powerful, his motives attractive; but he never shrunk from the avowal, that they were drawn wholly from things unseen, future, eternal. 'To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his holy angels.' 'If we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together.'—The sufferings of the present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.' And in this view he is not afraid to speak of suffering, as a favour connected with faith. It is *given* unto them, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to *suffer* for his sake.

How powerful must have been the convictions of his faith, and the integrity of his heart, which could not only conquer prejudice the most inveterate, but could lead him to renounce every prospect of riches and power, fame and distinction,—objects which were likely to have taken deep hold on a temper so fervent, a genius so active! He knew that the cause he was embracing would defeat all such expectations. He possibly might have advanced his fortune, certainly his reputation, under his Jewish masters, had he pursued those practices in which he was so hotly engaged, when he was *so exceedingly mad against the Church of God.*

What was the use which, in his new character, he made of his natural advantages? It was the same which he made of his supernatural graces. Did the one induce intellectual pride? Did the other inspire spiritual self-sufficiency? Was it his aim to exalt the accomplished preacher? Was it not his only endeavour to magnify the crucified Saviour? He sought no civil power, courted no ecclesiastical supremacy. He conferred honour on Episcopacy by ordaining bishops, but took no rank himself. He intermeddled with no party. All his interference with governments was to teach the people to obey them.

He had nothing to bias him at the time of his conversion, any more than afterwards.—He embraced Christianity when at the height of its discredit: in defending it, he was neither influenced by the obstinacy of supporting a preconceived opinion, nor the private motive of personal attachment. As he had not been a follower nor an acquaintance of Jesus, he had never been buoyed up with the hope of a place in his expected temporal kingdom. Had this been the case, mere pride and pertinacity in so strong a character might have led him to adhere to the falling cause, lest by deserting it he might

be accused of disappointment in his hopes, or pusillanimity in his temper. Was it probable then, that on any lower principle he would encounter every hazard, sacrifice every hope, annihilate every possibility of preferment, for the cause of a man, after his ignominious death, whom he had so fiercely opposed, when the danger was less alarming, and the hope less uncertain.

His strong faith was fortified by those trials which would have subdued a weak one. His zeal increased with the darkness of his earthly prospects. What were his inducements? The glory of God. What was his reward? Bonds and imprisonment. When arrived at any fresh scene of peril, did he smooth his language to secure his safety?—Did he soften an unpalatable truth to attract upon false grounds? Did he practise any artifice to swell the catalogue of his proselytes? Did he take advantage of ignorance and idolatry, when acclamations met him? Did he court popularity when he refused divine honours? Did he not prefer his Master's crown of thorns to the garlands with which the priests of Jupiter would have crowned him? Is it not observable, that this offer of deification disturbed the serenity of his spirit more than all his injuries had done?

Two remarks arise out of this circumstance. How little is popular acclamation any proof of the comparative excellence of the objects of acclaim; and how little is genuine grandeur of soul elated by it! Jesus, after all his miraculous deeds, as full of mercy as of power,—deeds repeatedly performed in his own country, and before the same spectators—never had divine honours paid him. While, for a single cure, Paul and his companions were instantly deified, though they rejected the homage with a holy indignation. Nothing could more fully prove their deep humility than that they bore the abuse and ill-treatment of the people with meekness; but when they would have worshipped them, 'they rent their clothes.'

In fine, no principle short of the faith described by our apostle in the eleventh of Hebrews, could have enabled him to sustain with such heroic firmness, the diversified sufferings alluded to in the twelfth of the second of Corinthians. Nothing short of that Divine support could have produced a disinterestedness so pure, a devotedness so sublime.

The afflictions of the saints serve to prove the distinguished character of God's favour. The grace so eminently afforded to this apostle neither exempted him from sorrow, nor suffering, nor dangers, nor calumny, nor poverty, nor a violent death. That its results were in the opposite direction shows at once the intrinsic nature of the Divine favour, and the spirit in which it is received and acted upon by sincere Christians.

CHAP. VII.

Saint Paul's prudence in his conduct towards the Jews.

The judgment of Saint Paul is remarkably manifest in the juxta-position of things. In opening his Epistle to his converts at Rome, among whom were many Jews for whose benefit he wrote, he paints the moral character of the Pagan capital in the darkest colours. The fidelity of his gloomy picture is corroborated by an almost contemporary historian,* who, though a Pagan and a countryman, paints it in still blacker shades, and without the decorum observed by Saint Paul.

The representation here made of Roman vice, would be in itself sufficiently pleasing to the Jews; and it would be more so, when we observe, what is most worthy of observation, the nature of the charges brought against the Romans. As if the wisdom of God had been desirous of vindicating itself by the lips of Paul in the eyes of his own countrymen the Jews, the vices charged upon the Romans are exactly those which stand in opposition to the spirit of some one injunction of the Decalogue. Now, though the heathen writers were unacquainted with this code, yet the spontaneous breach of its statutes proved most clearly these statutes to have been suggested by the most correct foreknowledge of the evil propensities of our common nature. The universal violation of the law, even by those who knew it not, manifested the omniscience of the Lawgiver.

And, let it be further remarked in this connection, that no exceptions could be taken against the justice of God, for animadverting on the breach of a law, which was not known: inasmuch as, so faithful was the law of Mount Sinai to the law of conscience, the revealed to the natural code of morals, that the Romans in offending one had offended both; in breaking unwittingly the Decalogue, they had knowingly rebelled against the law of conscience; they had sinned against the light of nature; they had stifled the suggestions of their better judgment; they had consciously abused natural mercies; they had confounded the distinctions of good and evil, of which they were not insensible. 'Their conscience bore them witness' that they violated many obvious duties, so that even these were without excuse.'

The unconverted Jews would, doubtless, then feel no small pleasure in contemplating this hideous portrait of human crimes as without excuse, and would naturally be tempted, with their usual self-complacency, to turn it to their own advantage, and boastfully to thank God that they were not like other men, or even like these Romans.

To check this unbecoming exultation, the apostle, with admirable dexterity, in the very next chapter† begins to pull down their high conceits. He presents them with a frightful picture of themselves, drawn from the life, and aggravated by a display of that superior light and knowledge which rendered their immoralities far more inexcusable. To the catalogue of the vices which he had reprehended in the others, he adds that of self-sufficiency, arrogance, and harsh judgment, which formed so distinguished a feature in the Pharisaic character. Paul in this point shows the equity of

* Suetonius. † Romans, ch. ii.

distributive justice. The Jews had sinned, not only against the laws they knew, but the law they venerated.—They rested in the law, not with gratitude for the distinction, but with security in the privilege; and they were ruined, he suggests, by a vain confidence in those external advantages which would have been their glory, had not privilege been converted into a substitute for piety. What apology should he now offer for the sins of the chosen nation, the peculiar people, the possessors and the boasters of the law, distinguished, not only by having received, but by being the hereditary, exclusive proprietors of the Divine Oracles? Thus, while he convicts his own nation, he gives an awful lesson to posterity of the vanity of forms and profession, that it is not possessing nor dispersing the Bible that will carry men to heaven, but only as they individually believe its doctrines, submit to its authority, and conform to its precepts. The apostle reminds them, that it is not the knowledge of God's will, which they possessed; nor the approbation of 'things that are excellent,' which they manifested; nor their confident ambition of teaching others; nor their skill to guide the blind; nor the form of knowledge; nor the letter of the law, which could avail without personal holiness.

After this severe reproof, for doing themselves the wrong things they censured, and for not doing the right things they taught, he suddenly turns upon them with a rapid succession of interrogatories respecting their own practice; personally applying each distinct subject of their instruction of others to each distinct failure of their own in those very points of conduct which they insisted on; proving upon them, that through this glaring inconsistency, 'the name of God was blasphemed among unbelievers.'

Thus he demonstrates that the Jew and Gentile stand on the same level with regard to their definitive sentence, each being to be judged according to their respective law. Nay, the conscientious Pagan will find more favour than the immoral Jew. Profession will not justify, but aggravate offence. Men, indeed, may see our exactness in forms and observances, and will justly commend what is in itself commendable; but as they cannot discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, they may admire as piety what is at worst hypocrisy, and at best but form. Whilst of the sincere Jew he declares, as we may also of the sincere Christian, he is a Jew who *is one inwardly, not in the letter, but in the heart and the spirit, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

By the august simplicity and incontrovertible reasoning of this Epistle to Rome, and by that supernatural power which accompanied it, he brought down the arrogance of human ability from its loftiest heights, subdued the pride of philosophy in its strong holds, and superseded the theology, without aiming at the splendour, of the most amiable and eloquent of all the Romans in his admired work on the 'Nature of the gods.' By one short address to that city, written in the demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, he 'destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent.'

Knowing that pride was the dominant disposition of his own countrymen, he loses no occasion of attacking this master sin, and frequently intimates how ill it became such an insignificant and perverse people to arrogate to themselves a superiority, for which though their advantages furnish them with means, their practice furnishes them with no shadow of pretence.

In speaking on this subject, Saint Paul used none of the cant, but displayed all the kindness of liberality. Speaking of the Jews, 'he bears them record that they had a zeal for God,' but instantly his veracity obliged him to qualify his candour, by lamenting that their zeal was not regulated by knowledge. Their perverseness rather increased his desire of serving them, than drove him into a hopeless indifference; their provocations grieved, but neither silenced nor exasperated him.

It was the high destiny of this distinguished apostle, that he was to be the honoured instrument of enlarging, to an indefinite extent, the hitherto contracted pale of Christianity. The law of Moses had been committed to one single people, and it was one of the conditions of that law, that they to whom it was given were interdicted from any free intercourse with the rest of the world. A larger heart and a higher mind than those of Paul could not have been found for the new and expanded service. Christianity, through him, opened wider her liberal arms, broke through the narrow barrier, and carried her unconditional offers of boundless emancipation to every captive of sin and ignorance throughout all the kingdoms of the world.

But though Paul's original destination was, that he should be the apostle of the Gentiles; though his labours were to be more especially consecrated to that innumerable mass to whom the narrow minded Jews grudged the very chance of access to heaven; yet where ever he came he showed this mark of regard, that he opened his first public instructions in the Jewish synagogue, referring the hearers in his discourses to their own prophets, as he did his Pagan auditors to their own authors.

It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken to the Jews, they being the depositaries of the antecedent revelations made by the Almighty; which revelations being preparatory to the introduction of the Gospel, and abounding with prophetic intimations of the Messiah, if the Jews should accept the new revelation as the completion of the old, it would largely contribute to convince the heathen that Christianity was in truth a Divine institution.

The annals of the Jews, insulated as they had been as a people, had become, by Divine appointment, connected with the history of other nations. Their captivity had brought them into contact with Persia and Babylon. As they always continued a commercial people, they had, after their dispersion, by their extensive traffic, carried their religion with their commerce into various countries. Thus their proverbial love of gain had been over-ruled to a providential purpose, that of carrying the knowledge of the one true God among the Gentiles. This again, by that secret working of Infinite Wisdom, served as a prelude to the appearance

of Christianity in these countries, and would probably lessen their indisposition to receive it. By the same providential ordination of that Power who educes good from evil, the Emperor Claudius, in banishing the Christians from Rome, caused the faith to be more extensively spread by these exiles, who were dispersed through different countries:—and, to mention another instance, by the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, though the comfort of Christian society was mutually lost, yet their separation caused the Gospel to be preached at the same time in two places instead of one. But though the sins of the worst men, and the infirmities of the best, are made subservient to God's gracious purposes, they justify neither the resentment of the Saint, nor the crime of the Emperor.

Saint Paul, in directing his instructions, first to the Jewish sojourners in the heathen cities, bequeathed an important lesson to all reformers,—that the most extensive plans of doing good to strangers should be accompanied with the most unabated zeal at home; and that natural connexions have the prior, though not the exclusive claim to their services.

If in the first promulgation of the Gospel-message, the apostle showed a regard to the *rights* of the Jewish nation, in his subsequent conduct on every possible occasion, he consults even their *prejudices*. At all times he showed as much respect for their religion as was consistent with that which he now professed; always studiously endeavouring to obviate objection, and to cut off every plausible ground of complaint. Thus, in treating with deference the Jewish laws and usages, though virtually abrogated, he loudly instructs us that temperance is not to be swallowed up by zeal; that it may be prudent for a time, to let some inferior errors alone, yet not without intimation or implication that they *are* errors; that premature attacks upon the lesser may obstruct the removal of the greater. And in other cases we may learn, that though extirpation may be indispensably necessary, yet it may, under certain circumstances, be better effected by the gradual process of successive strokes, than by laying at the first blow the axe to the root.

A lesson of discreet kindness may also be learnt from the same example in the domestic walks of life. If pious young persons do not patiently bear with any averseness in a parent or a friend from that serious spirit which they themselves have been happily brought to entertain; moroseness and ill-humoured opposition will not only increase the distaste, instead of recommending a religion, of which their own *temper affords so unamiable* and so unfair a specimen.

It was the same discretion which led Paul at one time to confer on Timothy* the initiatory rite of the Jewish church, because his mother was of Jewish extraction; and at another, induced him to forbid Titus undergoing the same ceremony, because his origin was Pagan.† The one was allowed, to avoid doing violence to Jewish prejudices; the other prohibited, lest the Gentile convert should be taught to place his dependance on any thing but the Saviour. He inflexibly resisted granting this introductory rite to Pagan converts. Though this union of candour with firmness is a very exemplary part of his character, it has not escaped the charge of inconsistency. But he thought it was acting in a more Christian spirit, to continue, in different instances, his conformity to ancient usages; than by a violent opposition to mere forms to irritate persons, some of whom conscientiously persevered in them.

Perhaps no quality has been more fatal to the interests of Christianity than prejudice. It is the moral cataract of the human mind. In vain the meridian sun of Truth darts his full beams. The mental eye is impervious to the strongest ray. When religion is to be assailed, prejudice knows how to blend antipathies. It leagued those mutual enemies Herod and Pontius Pilate in one common cause. It led the Jews to prefer the robber to the Saviour. Though they abhorred the Roman yoke, yet rather than Jesus shall escape, 'they will have no king but Cæsar.' At Jerusalem it had united the bigot Pharisee and the infidel Sadducee against Paul, till his declaration that he was of the former class, by exciting a party-spirit, suspended, but did not extinguish their fury. At Athens it combined, in one joint opposition, two sects, the most discordant in sentiment and practice. When truth was to be attacked, the rigid Stoic could unite with the voluptuous Epicurean.

Prejudice had not only blinded the understanding of the Jews, so as to prevent their receiving the truth, but led them to violate it, by asserting a glaring falsehood. When our Lord told them that 'if they would know the truth, the truth would make them free'—as they had no idea of spiritual freedom, so of civil liberty they had nothing to boast. But, exasperated at any offer of deliverance, because it implied subjugation, they indignantly replied, 'we were never in bondage to any man,' though it was notorious that they had been bond-slaves in Egypt, captives in Babylon, and were, at the very moment of this proud boast, tributary to the Romans.

Ignorance and prejudice respecting religion can never be fairly pleaded in excuse by minds cultivated by diligent inquiry on other subjects. Paul, indeed, says, that, though a persecutor, he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly. The apology from him is valid, for he does not offer the plea for ignorance and prejudice, till he was cured of both. His sincerity appears in his abandoning his error, his humility in confessing it. Our spiritual strength is increased by the retrospection of our former faults. This remembrance left a compassionate feeling for the errors of others on the impressible heart of Saint Paul. Perhaps in his early mad career against the Church of Christ, he might be permitted to carry it to such lengths, to afford a proof that Omnipotence can subdue even prejudice!

It is a melancholy feature in the character of the human mind, that Saint Paul met with less mercy from his brethren, among whom he had been bred, and whose religion approached so much nearer to that which he had adopted, than

* Acts, xvi. 3. † Gal. ii.

from the higher class of the Pagans, who stood at the farthest possible distance from it. Caiaphas, Ananias, Tertullus, and the whole Sanhedrim, were far more violent than Lysias, Felix, Festus, Gallio, the town-clerk of Ephesus, or the rulers of Thessalonica.

Even on that awful occasion, when prejudice did its worst, the Roman judge who condemned the Saviour of the world, was more candid than the High Priest, who delivered him up. While the Jews cried, Crucify! the Governor declared 'he found no fault in him:' and, but for the suppleness and venality of his character, would have protected the life which he sacrificed to Jewish bigotry. While Pilate deliberated, Caiaphas cut the matter short on the plea of *expediency**—'it is expedient that one man should die for the people.' In this High Priest the doctrine found a patron worthy of itself.

There was in the Divine Sufferer a veiled majesty; there was a mysterious grandeur thrown round his character; there were glimpses of glory breaking through the obscurity in which he was shrouded, which excited a curiosity not unmingled with fear in the great ones of the earth. It was a grand illustration of that solemn indistinctness which is said to be one cause of the sublime. Both Herod and Pilate were surprised into something like an involuntary respect, mixed with a vague apprehension of they knew not what.

But to return from this too long digression, for which the only apology that can be offered, is, that the uniform temper and conduct of Saint Paul with the Jews was eminently calculated to parry every objection that had any show of reason, and to remove every prejudice which was not invincible.

In the case of Paul, Agrippa appears to have been the only Jew in authority who ever manifested any show of candour towards him. Even the offended Athenians were so far affected with his discourse, as to betray their emotion by saying, 'We will hear thee again on this matter;' thus civilly softening rejection into procrastination;—while there is scarcely an instance of any Jewish people, as a body, fairly inquiring into the truth of the Christian doctrine with a real desire of information.

The Bereans, indeed, offer an honourable exception, and are accordingly distinguished by one, who rarely employs epithets, the biographer of Saint Paul, with the appellation of 'noble.' This thinking people did not lightly embrace the new religion without inquiry, but received it upon rational examination, daily searching the Scriptures; thus presenting us with an example of that union of faith and reason which constitutes the character of a sound Christian.

Though the Gentiles were ready to oppose Saint Paul wherever he came, we do not find that they pursued him with hostility from one city to another, as the Jews of Thessalonica did, in following him to Berea, to excite a persecution against him.

The temper to which allusion has been made, is not, it is to be feared, quite extinct. Are there not, at this favoured period of light and knowledge, some Christians by profession, who manifest more hostility towards those who are labouring to procure instruction for the Hindoos, than towards Hindooism itself? Are not shades of our own colour looked at with a more jealous eye, than a colour of the most opposite character? and is not the remark too nearly founded in experience; that approximation rather inflames than cools; that nearness aggravates because it is not identity? If, like the apostle, a man is impelled by his conscience to act against the opinion of those with whom he desires to live well; to obey the impulse, as it is a severe trial of his feelings, so it is a surer test of his integrity, than to expose himself to the censure of his enemies; of *their* hostility he was assured before; he is, in the other case, risking the loss of his friends.

Saint Paul's prudence, under the Divine direction, led him to adopt very different measures in his intercourse with the Jews and with the Gentiles; measures suggested by the different condition of the two classes, both in their civil and religious circumstances. To the one, the very name of Messiah was unknown; of the other, he was both the glory and the shame. To the one true God in whom they fully believed, they were to add the reception of Jesus Christ. 'He came to his own,' but his own, so far from receiving, crucified him. Subsequently to this event, Paul laboured to convince them, that this was the Saviour promised, first by God himself, then by a long and unbroken succession of the very prophets whom they professed to venerate. With these adversaries, therefore, he had substantial grounds on which to expostulate; analogies, from which to argue; promises, which they believed; predictions, of which they had expected the accomplishment; and, to leave them without the shadow of excuse, he had to plead the actual recent fulfilment of these predictions.

But with the Gentiles he had no common ground on which to stand, no references to which to send them, no analogies from which to reason, except indeed the visible works of creation and providence. He did what a profound thinker of our own country has since done more in detail; he showed them *the analogy of revealed religion with the constitution and course of nature.** In this he had, as it were, to address their senses rather than their intellect or their knowledge, great as were both,—for their wisdom had served only to lead them wider from the mark.

As they were little acquainted with first principles, he had with them no middle way to take. He could not improve upon polytheism; there was no such thing as mending idolatry; it was not a building to be repaired; it must be demolished; no materials were to be picked out from its ruins towards the construction of the everlasting edifice; the rubbish must be rolled away. A clear stage must be left for the new order of things; with this order it had no compatabilities; old things were past away, all things must become new.

* John xviii. 14.

* Bishop Butler.

The Sun of Righteousness which was to absorb the faint, but not false, lights of Judaism, was utterly to dispel the darkness of Paganism. One of the Roman emperors (most of whom thought that they could not have too many gods, nor too little religion) would have added Jesus to the number of their deities. Paul abhorred any such compromise. 'We know,' says he, 'an idol is nothing in the world.' Such an association, therefore, would not be of good and bad, but of every thing with nothing. Christianity would not accept of any thing short of the annihilation of the whole mythologic rabble.

The new economy was now to take place. The fundamental doctrine of One God over all blessed for ever, which had been long familiar to the Jew, was at length to be made known to the heathen, with the participation in common with the Jew, of salvation by his Son. The partition wall was taken down for ever.

Paul however retained, to the end of his ministry, a cordial kindness for 'his brethren after the flesh.' His heart's desire and prayer for Israel was, that they might be saved,—for the Rose of Sharon was grafted on the Stem of David. Not only the same God was to be worshipped by both, but 'Jesus whom he had sent;' while Paganism lay prostrate, never more to rise from its ruins. It is a remarkable circumstance, that while to this day surviving Israel remains without a temple, the surviving Pantheon remains without a worshipper.

CHAP. VIII.

Saint Paul's Judgment in his intercourse with the Pagans.

It is among the mysteries of Christianity, that the preaching of Jesus made so few converts, and his death so many. The more affecting were his discourses, the stronger was the indignation they excited; the deeper was the anxiety which he expressed for the salvation of men, so much the more vehemently were they exasperated against him; the more merciful were his miracles, so much the faster did they accelerate his ignominious catastrophe. 'Did not this prove,' says the eloquent Bossuet, 'that not his words, but his Cross was to bring all men to Him? Does it not prove that the power of his persuasion consisted in the shedding of his blood?' This he himself predicted—'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men into me.' Were it not for this reason, it would be astonishing to our shallow wisdom, that the Author of Christianity made so few proselytes to his own faith, and his apostles so many. That the disciple who denied him should, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, awaken, by a single sermon, the consciences of three thousand auditors; and that the persecutor, who reviled Him, should become under the influence of the same Divine Spirit, the mighty instrument of the conversion of the Pagan world.

If Saint Paul had declined visiting the learned and polished regions of Greece, it might have been produced against him, that he carefully avoided those cultivated cities where men were best able to judge of the consistency of the Gospel doctrines with its precepts, and of the truth of those miracles by which its Divinity was confirmed. The Greeks might have urged it as an argument against Paul's integrity, that he confined his preaching to the countries which they called barbarous, knowing they would be less acute in discovering inconsistencies, and more easily imposed upon by impostures which men of liberal education would have immediately detected. His visiting every city famous for literature, science, and philosophy, would also be a complete refutation of any such charge in after ages. 'Because,' says a judicious commentator, 'if upon an accurate examination, great numbers of men embraced the Gospel, who were best qualified to judge of its nature and evidences, their conversion would render it indubitable in after times, that the Gospel was supported by those great and undeniable miracles which were performed in every country by the preachers of Christianity; so that no person might hereafter suspect that idolatry was destroyed and Christianity established merely through the simplicity and ignorance of the people among whom it was first preached.'*

Saint Paul was with more propriety selected to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, than if he had been of Gentile extraction; none but a teacher, educated as he had been, under an eminent Jewish doctor, would have been so competent to produce, before both Jews and Gentiles, proofs that the miracles, sufferings, and death of Jesus happened in exact conformity to the predictions of those prophets of whom the Jews had perfect knowledge, and to whom, though the Gentiles previously knew them not, yet it is probable that he afterwards for their fuller confirmation would refer them.

There appears to have been a considerable difference between Saint Paul's reception among the Jewish and Gentile populace. Among the former, the 'common people, who had heard Jesus gladly,' must have had their prejudices softened, and in many instances removed; even those, probably, who were not converted, had seen and heard of his miracles with astonishment. They were also witnesses of the wonderful effects produced by Saint Peter's sermon. Their minds were become so favourably disposed, that after the miracle wrought by Peter and John,† the enraged council did not venture to punish them, 'because of the people, for all men glorified God for that which was done.'

While the Heathen governors seem, in their transactions with Saint Paul, less intolerant than the Jewish Sanhedrim, the Heathen multitude appear to have been more furious than the Jewish. The Jewish leaders had a personal hatred to Christ; the Gentile community had a national hatred to the Jews. If a party among the Jews detested the Christians, the Pagans as a body despised the Jews, whilst they would consider Christianity but as a new modification of an antiquated and degrading superstition, made worse by the offensive addition of certain tenets, still more unphilosophical and incredible

* Macknight on the Life of Saint Paul.
† Acts, ch. iv.

than were taught under the old dispensation. The contempt of the Gentiles was founded on their ignorance of the true religion of Judaism, and that again had prevented any inquiry into their opinions. From the prejudiced pen of Tacitus, and the sarcastic muse of Juvenal, we see the disdain in which they were held. The great writers, only less culpable than modern infidels, like them collected a string of misrepresentations, and then turned into ridicule the system of their own invention.

The philosophers, who disagree each with the other, all join in the contemning more especially one doctrine of Christianity, which every sect alike conceived to be the most inconsistent with their own tenets, and the most contradictory to general philosophical principles,—the resurrection of the body, which they contemptuously called the *hope of worms*.

The Pagan magistrates looked with a jealous eye upon all innovators; not indeed so much from an aversion to any novelty of religious opinion, (for to this they were so indifferent as to make little objection to any mode of worship which did not seek to subvert their own;) but, through the machinations of the mercenary priests, who fearful of any invasion of their corrupt establishment, any detection of their frauds, any disclosure of their mysteries, any danger of their altars, their auguries, their profitable oracles, and above all, any abridgment of their political influence; excited the civil governors against Paul by the stale artifice of insinuating that his designs were hostile to the state.

The artisans who enriched themselves by the occupation of making the symbols of idolatry, found that, by the contempt into which their deities were likely to be brought, their craft would not only be endangered, but destroyed. This conviction, more perhaps than any zeal for their own religion, served to influence them also against that of Saint Paul. And finally the populace, who liked the easy and pleasant way of appeasing their divinities by shows and pageants, and ceremonies, and lustral days, were unwilling to lose their holidays, and all the decorations and pleasures which distinguished them, and did not care to exchange this gay and amusing religion for the spiritual, sober, and unostentatious worship of the Christians.

There was therefore no disposition in any class of society to receive the doctrines of the Gospel, or to forgive the intrusion of its teachers. Paul, unsupported, unfriended, had to open his own commission to audiences backed by multitudes, protected by power, patronized by learning, countenanced by the national priesthood. It was a far more unequal contest than that of David and Goliath; for, besides the people, he had to combat with the giants of Areopagus. But greater was He that was for him, than they who were against him.

Had he not been an adept in the knowledge of human nature, how could there have been, in his diversified discourses, such an adaptation to the moral wants of men? His superiority in this respect appears not only in his general knowledge of man in the abstract, but in his acquaintance with life and manners, in what we call knowledge of the world; in his scrupulous observance of time and place, in his admirable judgment in so skilfully accommodating his discourses to the condition, character, and circumstances of the persons whom he addressed. To some he applied as to decided enemies to Christianity; to others as utterly unacquainted with its nature, and ignorant of its design, but not averse from inquiring into its truth. He always carefully distinguished between the errors of the followers of religion and the sins of her adversaries. To some he addressed himself as awakened, to others, as enlightened, to many as sincere, but to none as perfect.

The various powers of his opulent mind he exercised with a wise appropriation to the genius of those whom he addressed. With the Jews 'he reasoned;' with the Athenian controvertists 'he disputed;' at Ephesus 'he boldly disputed and persuaded.'

The apostle's zeal was never cooled by the improbability of success. He knew that what seemed hopeless to men was not impossible to God. Even at Paphos, where the most impure worship was offered to the most impure deity, he made a most important convert in the Proconsul himself.* This wise governor holds out an example to men in high public stations; he suffered not himself to be influenced by report, or duped by misrepresentation; he would hear with his own ears 'the word of God' which Paul preached, and see with his own eyes the miracle which confirmed it.

In his preaching at Antioch,† he introduces his great commission to the Gentiles in the most dignified and masterly manner, referring the Jewish auditors to the striking passages of their national history; to the prophecies and their fulfilment: to the attestation of the Baptist; to Christ's death and resurrection. He ends with a most awful peroration; 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish;' and then, with a measured sternness which nothing could shake, he makes the disclosure of that grand scheme, of Almighty goodness, the scheme of proclaiming to the Gentiles that Gospel which the chosen people to whom it had been offered, so contumeliously rejected. How striking the contrast of manner in which these words of the apostle were received by the two classes of hearers!—the envy and malignity, 'the contradictions and blasphemies of the Jews;' the joyful gratitude with which the heathen 'glorified the word of the Lord,' at the announciation of a blessing so vast and so unexpected!

To the people of Lystra his address is short, plain, and simple, yet passionate and energetic: so plain, as to be not only understood, but felt by the meanest auditor; yet so powerful, that when aided by a miracle of mercy, which he wrought before them, he scarcely restrained them from offering him divine honours. His appearance before Felix having been more largely detailed by the sacred historian, we may well be allowed a more particular consideration of it. Heathen historians represent Felix as having, by every kind of misconduct, excited disturbances in Judea, and by exactions and oppressions obtained the contempt of his subjects, to whom he

* Sergius Paulus. † Acts, ch. 13.

had occasioned great calamities; his mal-administration, but for the intervention of the governor of Syria, would have kindled a war; and an instance of it indeed occurs on the very occasion of which we are about to speak, in Paul's long detention in confinement. It is recorded in the Acts, that he hoped the apostle would have bribed him with money, in order to procure his escape.*

Let us now contrast the different conduct of the popular advocate retained by the Jews against Paul, with that of Paul himself, towards this corrupt governor. Tertullus, a florid speaker, is not ashamed, in the true spirit of party oratory, to offer the grossest adulation to this wicked judge; not only extolling what he knew to be false,—the tranquillity produced by his administration, and 'the worthy deeds' done by him,—but even exalting him into a sort of deity, by whose *providence* their prosperity was procured. Then, in the usual strain of artful and disingenuous adulation, having already exceeded all bounds of decency, he finishes his harangue by hypocritically expressing his fears that praise 'might be tedious to him.'

After the affected declamation of this rhetorical parasite, how are we refreshed with the wise, temperate, and simple defence of the apostle! Instead of loading Tertullus with reproaches for the infamous charges of heresy and sedition brought against himself, he maintains a dignified silence till the governor 'beckoned to him to speak.' He then enters upon his vindication without a single invective against his accusers; and what is still more honourable to his own character, without a single compliment to his judge, though well aware that his liberty, and even his life, were in his hands. Unjust as Felix was, the charges against Paul were too flagrantly false to mislead him, and the noble simplicity of the prisoner's defence carried in it something so convincing to the understanding of the judge, that he durst not act upon the allegations of the accuser, nor condemn the innocent.

At a subsequent meeting, Paul seemed more intent to alarm the conscience of the governor, than he had previously been to assert his own integrity. Felix, ever presenting us with the idea of a bad mind, ill at ease with itself, sends for Paul, and desires to 'hear him concerning the faith of Christ.' Charmed, no doubt, with the occasion given him, Paul uses it widely. He does not embark on topics irrelevant to the immediate case of his auditors, nor by personal reproof does he expose himself to the charge of contumacy. He never loses sight of the respect due to the judge's office, but still, as he knew the venality and profligacy with which he administered that office, together with the licentious character of his wife, who was present, he reasoned, not declaimed; he '*reasoned*' on the virtues in which he knew they were so shamefully deficient—*righteousness and temperance;* and then, doubtless with the dignity of one who was himself to 'judge angels,' closed his discourse with referring these notorious violators of *both* duties to the judgment to *come*.

The result of this discourse is the best evidence of the power of his reasonings.—Conscience-struck, *Felix trembled*. The judge dissolved the court, dismissed the prisoner, withheld the sentence, deferred the further trial to an indefinite time,—which time he contrived should never arrive,—till both were cited to appear together before the mighty Judge of quick and dead. Paul throughout maintains his character, and Felix adds one to the numberless instances in which strong convictions not being followed up, only serve to enhance guilt and aggravate condemnation.

To the inhabitants of Ephesus, his reasoning and his persuasive powers are alternately exercised. In his conduct in this place we incidentally discover a singular instance of his discretion in avoiding to excite unnecessary irritation. He found in the Ephesians a strong devotion to one particular idol; yet it is intimated, in a candid speech of their chief magistrate, that he had neither reviled their great goddess, Diana, nor profaned their temples. We may, therefore, fairly presume that he contented himself with preaching against idolatry in general, instead of endeavouring to excite the popular indignation by inveighing against the local idol. *

It is not the meanest of the triumphs of incipient Christianity, that at this place the professors of forbidden arts brought out their costly professional books, the registers of their unlawful mysteries, and burnt them, giving a striking proof of the sincerity of their conversion, by thus putting it out of their power to repeat their impious incantations; their destroying them in the presence of the people, was a triple sacrifice of their prejudices, their credit, and their profit. What an example have they left to those who, though professing Christianity, give birth, or afford encouragement, to profane or profligate books, which, though of a different character from those of the Ephesian sorcerers, possess a *magic* power over the mind of the reader, not less pernicious in itself, and far more extensive in its influence. †

Saint Paul's good sense, and may we be permitted to say, his good taste—qualities we could rather wish than expect to see *always* brought to the service of religion,—were eminently displayed in his examination at Cesarea. While his pleading before the royal audience, and other persons of dignity and station, exhibits a fine specimen of wisdom and good breeding, it exhibits it without the smallest sacrifice of principle, or the least abatement of truth. At once, his doctrines are scriptural, and his language is classical. On this occasion, as upon all others, conscious dignity is mingled with politeness; an air, carrying with it the authority of truth, with the gentleness of Christianity, pervades all he says and does.

This admirable conduct has extorted, even from that eloquent rhapsodist, the sceptical au-

* Acts, ch. 24.

* Acts, 19.

† When the French revolution had brought to light the fatal consequences of some of Voltaire's writings, some half-scrupulous persons, no longer willing to afford his fourscore volumes a place in their library, sold them at a low price. This measure, though it 'stayed the plague' in their own houses, caused the infection to spread wider. The Ephesian magicians made no such compromise; they burnt theirs.

thor* of 'the Characteristics,' a confession, 'how handsomely Paul accommodates himself to the apprehension and temper of those polite people, the witty Athenians, and the Roman court of judicature, in the presence of their great men and ladies.' At this last-named memorable audience, with what admirable temper does he preserve his reverence for constituted authorities, while he boldly recapitulates those passages in his former life which were naturally calculated to give offence.—His preliminary compliment to Agrippa was judiciously conceived in a manner to procure attention to his projected defence, without in any sense deserving the name of flattery, or in any degree compromising the truth he meant to deliver. While it answered its proper end, it served as an attestation of his own veracity and of the truth of Christianity; for in complimenting the king on the knowledge of the facts to which he referred him, he laid himself open to immediate detection if the circumstances had not been strictly correct, affording, 'a remarkable proof,' says Lord Lyttelton, 'both of the notoriety of the fact and the integrity of the man, who, with so fearless a confidence, could call upon a king to give testimony for him, while he was sitting in judgment upon him.'

The whole defence is as rational as it is elegant. The self-possession, the modest intrepidity, and the pertinent choice of matter; furnish a model for innocent sufferers under similar circumstances.

As on the one hand it is a great hardship for an accused person to have to plead before ignorance and prejudice, so on the other it was not more just than polite and prudent, for Paul to begin by expressing his satisfaction that he should at least be tried by a judge, who, from his knowledge, his education, and his habits, was competent to determine on the cause. While he scruples not to declare the inveterate prejudices, the blindness, and persecuting spirit of his former life, he does ample justice to his own character as a scholar and a moralist. Well as he knew that his piety would not clear him at the tribunal before which he stood, yet the fair justification of himself from the crimes laid to his charge, was due, not only to his own character, but to the religion which he professed.

Having been himself brought to embrace Christianity by no powers of reasoning, by no trains of argument, he allowed himself either to employ or neglect them at discretion in addressing these assemblies. On the present occasion he limits himself to matter of fact, and seems to think a statement of his own conversion would be more likely to impress a judge 'expert in all customs and questions which were among the Jews.' He insisted dogmatically but on one point, the great doctrine of the Resurrection, for asserting which he had been so often assailed; and he asks, why should it be thought a thing incredible? This, however, he does not *argue*; perhaps conscious of having so amply stated, and so argumentatively defended it in his epistolary writings, now sufficiently known.

Festus, with that scorn which any allusion to his tenet never failed to excite, impatiently interrupted him, but with a reproof which had more of irony than anger, as if he thought his credulity rather the effect of insanity than of wickedness, the object of ridicule rather than of censure. This irritating charge, however, did not make Paul forget the respect due to the place which Festus filled; and while he vindicated the soundness of his own intellect and the sobriety of his doctrine, he did not fail to address the governor by the honourable appellation of 'most noble,' to which his dignity entitled him. His example in this respect, as in all other particulars, was of an instructive nature; teaching us to separate the civility of speech due to office from the respect due only to personal character, and justify the modern titles and epithets of reverence which have occasioned so much discussion in many of our public forms.

The apostle's speech had produced a considerable emotion in the king, who, however, was determined to act rather upon his convenience than his convictions. The apostle concludes as he had begun, by seizing on the part of Agrippa's character which he could most conscientiously commend, his perfect knowledge of the subject before the court. In his solemn interrogation at the close, 'King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets?' more is meant than meets the ear; for, if he really believed the prophets, could he refuse to believe the accomplishment of their predictions? His emphatical answer to his own question, 'I know that thou believest,' drew from the startled monarch a free avowal of his partial convictions. The brief but affecting prayer with which the trial closes, is as elegantly turned as if the Apostle had been the courtier.

Agrippa appears, in this instance, in a light so much more advantageous than any of the other judges before whom either Paul or his Lord were cited, that we cannot but regret that he let slip an occasion so providentially put in his way. This illustrious person affords another awful proof of the danger of stifling convictions, postponing inquiries, and neglecting opportunities.

Though the political and military splendour of Athens had declined, and the seat of government, after the conquest of Greece by the Romans, was transferred to Corinth, yet her sun of glory was not set. Philosophy and the liberal arts were still carefully cultivated; students in every department, and from every quarter, resorted thither for improvement, and her streets were crowded by senators and rhetoricians, philosophers and statesmen.

As Paul visited Athens with views which had instigated no preceding, and would probably be entertained by no subsequent traveller, so his attention in that most interesting city was attracted by objects far different from theirs. He was in all probability qualified to range, with a learned eye, over the exquisite pieces of art, and to consult and enjoy the curious remains of literature,—theatres, and temples, and schools of philosophy, sepulchres, and cenotaphs, statues of patriots, and portraits of heroes;—monuments by which the artist had insured to himself the immortality he was conferring. Yet one edifice

* Lord Shaftsbury.

alone arrested the apostle's notice.—the altar of the idolatrous worshippers. One record of antiquity alone invited his critical acumen,—THE INSCRIPTION TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

The disposition of this people, their passion for disputation, their characteristic and proverbial love of novelty, had drawn together a vast assembly. Many of the philosophical sects eagerly joined the audience. Curiosity is called by an ancient writer, the wantonness of knowledge. These critics came, it is likely, not as inquirers, but as spies.—The grave stoics probably expected to hear some new unbroached doctrines which they might overthrow by argument; the lively Epicureans some fresh absurdity in religion, which would afford a new field for diversion; the citizens, perhaps, crowding and listening from the mere motive that they might afterwards have to tell the *new thing* they should hear. Paul took advantage of their curiosity. As he habitually opened his discourses with great moderation, we are the less surprised at the measured censure, or rather the implied civility of his introduction. The ambiguous term 'superstitious' which he employed, might be either construed into respect for their spirit of religious inquiry, or into disapprobation of its unreasonable excess; at least he intimated that they were so far from not reverencing the acknowedged god, that they worshipped one which was 'unknown.'

With his usual discriminating mind, he did not 'reason' with these elegant and learned Polytheists 'out of the Scriptures,' of which they were totally ignorant, as he had done at Antioch and Cesarea, before judges who were trained in the knowledge of them: he addressed his present auditors with an eloquent exposition of natural religion, and of the providential government of God, politely illustrating his observations by citing passages from one of their own authors. Even by this quotation, without having recourse to Scripture, he was able to controvert the Epicurean doctrine, that the Deity had no interference with human concerns; showing them on their own principles, that 'we are the offspring of God;' that 'in Him we live and move, and have our being;' and it is worth observing, that he could select from a poet, sentiments which should come nearer to the truth than from a philosopher.

The orator, rising with his subject, after briefly touching on the long suffering of God, awfully announced that ignorance would be no longer any plea for idolatry; that if the Divine forbearance had permitted it so long, it was in order to make the wisest not only see, but feel the insufficiency of their own wisdom in what related to the great concerns of religion; but he now *commanded all men every where to repent.*—He concludes by announcing the solemnities of Christ's future judgment, and the resurrection from the dead.

In considering Saint Paul's manner of unfolding to these wits and sages the power and goodness of that Supreme Intelligence who was the object of their 'ignorant worship,' we are at once astonished at his intrepidity and his management; intrepidity, in prefering this bold charge against an audience of the most accomplished scholars in the world,—in charging ignorance upon Athens! blindness on 'the eye of Greece!'—and management in so judiciously conducting his oration that the audience expressed neither impatience nor displeasure, till he began to unfold the most obnoxious and unpopular of all doctrines,—Jesus raised from the dead.

It is recorded by Saint Luke of this polished and highly intellectual city, that it was *wholly given up to idolatry;* a confirmation of the remark of Pausanias, that there were more image-worshippers in Athens than in all Greece besides.

We have here a clear proof that the reasonableness of Christianity was no recommendation to its adoption by those people who, of all others, were acknowledged to have cultivated reason the most highly.—What a melancholy and heart-humbling conviction, that wit and learning, in their loftiest elevation, open no natural avenue to religion in the heart of man; that the grossest ignorance leaves it not more inaccessible to Divine truth. Paul never appears to have made so few proselytes in any place as at Athens; and it is so far from being true, as its disciples assert, that philosophy is never intolerant, that the most bitter persecution ever inflicted on the Christians was under the most philosophical of all the Roman Emperors. *

In this celebrated city, in which Plato, near five hundred years before, discoursed so eloquently only the immortality of the soul, Paul first preached the resurrection of the soul, Paul first preached the resurrection of the body. Horace Speaks of *searching* for truth in the groves of Academus. But Saint Paul was the first who ever *taught* it there.

CHAP. IX.

On the general principles of Saint Paul's writings.

ONE of the most distinguished writers of antiquity, says, that 'one man may believe himself to be as certain of his error as another of his truth.' How many illustrious ancients, under the influence of this conceit, may either, have carried truth out of its proper sphere, or brought on some error to fill the place where the truth, so transferred, had left vacant. The Pagan philosophers held so great a variety of opinions of the supreme good of the nature of man, that one of their most learned writers is said to have reckoned the number to amount to no less than two hundred and eighty-eight. †

Christianity ought to be accounted a singular blessing, were it only that he has simplified this conjectural arithmetic, and reduced the hundreds to a unit. Saint Paul's brief, but comprehensive definition, 'repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' forming one grand central point, in which, if all the vain aims and unsatisfied desires of the anxious

* Marcus Aurelius. † Varro.

philosophers do not meet, this succinct character of Christianity abundantly supplies what their aims and desires failed to accomplish; for 'they erred, not knowing the Scriptures: those Scriptures which proclaim the wants of man when they declare his depravity, and the power of God, in providing its only remedy.'

Saint Paul labours sedulously to convince his converts of the apostacy of the human race. He knew this to be the only method of rendering the Scriptures either useful or intelligible; no other book having explicitly proclaimed or circumstantially unfolded this prime truth. He furnishes his followers with this key, that they might both unlock the otherwise hidden treasures of the Bible, and open the secret recesses of their own hearts. He knew that, without this strict inquisition into what was passing within, without this experimental knowledge of their own lapsed state, the best books may be read with little profit, and even prayer be offered up with little effect.

He directs them to follow up this self-inspection, because without it they could not determine on the quality, even of their best actions. 'Examine yourselves; prove your own selves,' is his frequent exhortation. He knew, that if we did not impede the entrance of Divine light into our own hearts, it would show us many an unsuspected corruption; that it would not only disclose existing evils, but awaken the remembrance of former ones, of which perhaps the consequences still remain, though time and negligence have effaced the act itself from the memory. Whatever be the structure they intend to erect, the apostles always dig deep for a foundation before they begin to build. 'On Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' as on a broad basis, Saint Paul builds all doctrine and grounds all practice; and firm indeed, must that foundation be, which has to sustain such a weight. He points to him as the sole author of justifying faith. From this doctrine he derives all sanctity, all duty, and all consolation. After having proved it to be productive of that most solid of all supports, *peace of God*; this peace he promises, not only through the benignity of God, but through the grace of Christ, showing, by an induction of particulars, the process of this love of God in its moral effects,—how afflictions promote 'patience,' how patience fortifies the mind by 'experience,' and how experience generates 'hope;'—reverting always in the end to that point from which he sets out; to that love of God, which is kindled in the heart by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

He makes all true holiness to hinge on this fundamental doctrine of redemption by the Son of God, never separating his offices from his person, nor his example from his propitiation; never teaching that man's nature is to be reformed, without pointing out the instrument, and the manner by which the reformation is to be effected. For one great excellence of Saint Paul's writings consist, not only in his demonstrating to us the riches and the glories of Christ, but in showing how they may be conveyed to us: how we may become possessed of an interest, of a right in them.

Though there is no studied separations of the doctrinal from the practical parts of his Epistles, they who would enter most deeply into a clear apprehension of the former, would best do it by a strict obedience to the precepts of the latter. He every where shows, that the way to receive the truth is to obey it; and the way to obey is to love it. Nothing so effectually bars up the heart and even the understanding, against the reception of truth, as the practice of sin. 'If any man will DO his will,' says the Divine Teacher himself, 'he shall *know* of the doctrine.'*

It is in this practical application of Divine truth, that the supreme excellence of St. Paul's preaching consists. Whenever he has been largely expatiating on the glorious privileges of believers, he never omits to guard his doctrine from the use to which he probably foresaw loose professors might convert it, if delivered to the uninformed, stripped from the connection with its proper adjunct. †

Thus, his doctrines are never barely theoretical. He hedges them in, as we have elsewhere observed, with the whole circle of duties, or with such as more immediately grow out of his subject, whether they relate to God, to others, or ourselves. Though it would not be easy to produce, in his writings, a single doctrine which is not so protected, nevertheless, perhaps, there is scarcely one, in the adoption of which, bold intruders have not leaped over the fence he raised; or by their negligence laid it bare for the unhallowed entrance of others, converting his inclosure into a waste. If the duty of living righteously, soberly, and godly, was ever pre-eminently taught by any instructor, that instructor is Saint Paul; if ever the instructions of any teacher have been strained or perverted, they are his. But if he never presses any virtue, as independent of faith, which is too much the case with some, he never fails to press it as a consequence of faith, which is sometimes neglected by others. The one class preach faith as if it were an insulated doctrine; the other, virtue, as if it were a self-originating principle.

It is also worthy of observation, that in that complete code of Evangelical law, the twelfth chapter of the Romans, after unfolding with the most lucid clearness, the great truths of our religion, he carefully inculcates the *temper* it demands, before he proceeds to enforce the duties it imposes; that we must be 'holy' before we can be 'acceptable;' that we must be transformed in the renewing of our mind, is at once made a consequence of the grace of God, and a preliminary to our duties towards our fellow creatures. We must offer up '*ourselves* a living sacrifice to God,' before we are directed to act conscientiously to man. The other disposition, which he names as an indispensable prelude, is humility; for in the very opening of his subject, he prefaces it with an injunction, *not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.* To omit to cultivate the spirit in which doctrines are to be embraced, and the temper in which

* John vii. 17.

† We learn from St. Peter, that this perversion had begun even in his own time. Ebion and his followers afterwards pushed the charge against Paul as far as antinomianism. Nor has the spirit of the accusation on the one hand, nor the adulteration of the principle on the other, entirely ceased

duties are to be performed, is to mutilate Christianity, and to rob it of its appropriate character and its highest grace. After having shown the means for the acquisition of virtue, he teaches us diligently to solicit that divine aid, without which all means are ineffectual, and all virtues spurious.

In this invaluable summary, or rather this spirit of Christian laws, there is scarcely any class of persons, to which some appropriate exhortation is not directed. After particularly addressing those who fill different degrees of the ministerial office, he proceeds to the more general instructions in which all are equally interested. Here, again, he does not fail to introduce his documents with some powerful principle. Affection and sincerity are the inward feelings which must regulate action; 'let *love* be without *dissimulation*.'

The love he inculcates is of the most large and liberal kind; compassion to the indigent, tender sympathy with the feelings of others, whether of joy or sorrow, as their respective circumstances require; the duties of friendship and hospitality are not forgotten; condescension to inferiors; a disposition to be at peace with all men is enforced; from his deep knowledge of the human heart, implying, however, by a significant parenthesis—*if it be possible*—the difficulty, if not impossibility, which its corruptions would bring to the establishment of universal discord.

He applies himself to all the tender sensibilities of the heart, and concatenates the several fruits of charity so closely, from being aware how ready people are to deceive themselves on this article, and to make one branch of this comprehensive grace stand proxy for another: he knew that many are disposed to make almsgiving a ground for neglecting the less pleasant parts of charity; that some give, in order that they may rail, and think that while they open their purses, they need put no restraint on their tongues.

He closes his catalogue of duties with those which we owe to our enemies; and in a paradox peculiar to the genius of Christianity, shows that the revengeful are the conquered, and those who have the magnanimity to forgive, the conquerors. He exhorts to this new and heroic species of victory over evil, not merely by exhibiting patience under it, but by overcoming its assaults with good. Could this conquest over nature, which soars far above mere forgiveness, be obtained by any other power but the supernatural strength previously communicated?

Thus he every where demonstrates, that the maxims of the morality he inculcates, are derived from a full fountain, and fed by perennial supplies. When he speaks of human virtue, he never disconnects it from Divine influence. When he recommends the 'perfecting holiness,' it must be done 'in the fear of the Lord.' He shows that there is no other way of conquering the love of the world, the allurements of pleasure, and the predominance of selfishness, but by seeking a conformity to the image of God, as well as by aiming at obedience to his law.

That ignorance is the mother of devotion, has been the axiom of a superstitious church; nor is the votary of fanaticism less apt to despise knowledge than the slave of superstition.

The first thing that God formed in nature was light. This preliminary blessing disclosed the other beauties of his creation, which had else remained as unseen as if they had remained uncreated. By that analogy which runs through his works, his first operation on the heart is bestowing on it the light of his grace. Amidst the causes of the corruption, the darkness of ignorance is scarcely to be distinguished from that of sin.

Such indeed is the condition of man in his present state, that he ought to labour indefatigably under the Divine teaching, to recover some glimpses of that intellectual worth which he lost when he forfeited his spiritual excellence. Religious men should be diligent in obtaining knowledge, or they will not be able to resist gainsayers; they will swallow assertions for truths, and conclude every objection to be valid which they cannot refute. An unfurnished mind is liable to a state of continual indecision. Error will have the advantage in the combat, where the champion of truth enters the field without arms; for impiety still shows itself, as it did in the Garden of Eden, under the semblance of knowledge.

Saint Paul estimated just views and right notions of religion so highly, that he makes the improvement in knowledge in the Colossians, a matter not only of fervent desire, but of incessant prayer. He prays not only that they might be sincere, but intelligent Christians, 'filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;' but he does not forget to teach them that this knowledge must be made practical, *they must walk worthy of the Lord, they must be fruitful in every good work.* It is among the high ascriptions of glory to Christ, that in Him are hid all the treasures of *wisdom* and *knowledge.* And this ascription is pressed upon *us* for the manifest purpose of impelling us to seek a due participation of them from Him.

Saint Paul was a strenuous opposer of religious ignorance. It is not too much to say, that he places Intelligence as the ground-work of Christianity. To know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, he considers as the first rudiments taught in the divine school. This knowledge can only be acquired by a cordial love, and indefatigable study of the volume of inspiration. All the conjectures of the brightest imagination, all the discoveries of the profoundest science, all the glorious objects of created beauty, all the attributes of angels, all the ideas of excellence we can conceive or combine, affords but faint shadows, inexpressive figures of the Divinity. The best lights we can throw upon his perfections are from his own Word, assisted by his own Spirit; the clearest sight we can obtain of them is from our faith in that word, and our only strength from our acquiescence in the offers of that Spirit.

And where shall we look in the whole sacred Record for a more consummate statement, at once of the proper objects of knowledge, and of the duties resulting from its acquisition, than in the writings of this Apostle? No one who has devoutly studied him, can shift off the neglect

of duty by the plea of ignorance. It would be vindicating one sin by committing another. He every where exhibits such luminous characters of God and Christ, such clear views of right and wrong, such living pictures of good and evil, such striking contrasts of human corruption and Christian purity, that he who would evade the condemnation which awaits the neglect, or the violation of duty, must produce some other apology than that he did not know it. What excuse will those modern sceptics offer for their traducement of writings, which they were too shrewd either to despise or neglect? Whatever is good in their systems, they derive from a Revelation which they affect to contemn. They are rich only from what they steal, not from that property which they may call their own. Reason, which could in no wise discover what Christianity has taught, is glad to adopt, while she disavows, what she could never have found out herself. She has, however, too little honesty, and too much pride, to acknowledge her obligation, to the source from which she draws. She mixes up what she best likes with her own materials, and defies the world, by separating them, to detect the cheat. Revelation, in truth, has improved reason, as well as perfected morals.

But if the human reasoner despises Christianity, some Christians are too much disposed to villify reason. This contempt they did not learn of Saint Paul. He never taught, that, to neglect an exact method of reasoning, would make men sounder divines. No such consequences can be deduced from his writings. Revealed religion, indeed, happily for the poor and illiterate, may be firmly believed, and vitally understood, without a very accurate judgment, or any high cultivation of the rational powers. But without both, without a thorough acquaintance with the arguments, without a knowledge of the evidences, it can never be successfully defended. Ignorance on these points would throw such a weight into the scale of scepticism, as would weaken, if it did not betray the cause of truth. In our days an ignorant teacher of religion is 'a workman that *needeth* to be ashamed.' He should carefully cultivate his reason, were it only to convince himself of its imperfection. The more he proceeds under the guidance of God's Spirit to improve his rational faculties, the more he will discover their insufficiency: and his humility striking its root more deeply as his knowledge shoots higher, he will become more profoundly thankful for that Divine revelation, which alone can satisfy the desires of his mind, and fill the cravings of his heart.

Some well-meaning instructors have pleaded, in justification of their low attainments, Saint Paul's exaltation of 'the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' 'It was,' says a learned divine, 'a mode not unusual with Saint Paul, to call a thing, not by a term descriptive of its real nature, but by a name expressive of the opinion formed of it by the world, and of the effects produced by it.'—In calling the Gospel foolishness, therefore, he only adopted the language of the Greeks, its Pagan enemies. It was 'the natural man,' to whom the things of the Spirit of God were foolishness. The expression, therefore, offers no apology for nonsense, no plea for ignorance. However, the humility of Paul might lead him to depreciate 'the wisdom of his own words,' he has left us the means of knowing that they were of the very first excellence. He depreciates, it is true, all eloquence, whether true or false, which was adopted as a substitute 'for the Cross of Christ.' He would indeed reprobate the idea of loading a discourse with ornaments, which might draw the attention of the audience from the Saviour to the preacher, which by its splendour might cast into shade the object he was bound to reveal; which might throw into the back ground that Cross which should ever be the prominent figure. But though, in establishing the doctrine of the Cross, God accomplished a promise of long standing, and frequent repetition that he would 'destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent,' yet there is no promise that ignorance or folly shall be erected on the ruins of wisdom; the promise runs, that the wisdom from above shall supersede the pride of human wisdom.

One of the fundamental truths which the apostle labours to establish, is, that the attainment of Divine knowledge, progress in holiness, conquest over sin, with all other spiritual gains, are only to be effected by the power of the Spirit of God. This doctrine, the importance of which he every where intimates, he more explicitly teaches in the eighth chapter of Romans. This conviction, which he felt deeply, he paints forcibly.—Yet, though insisted on with such frequency and emphasis, many receive this as a speculative dogma, instead of a highly practical truth. Many distrust the reality of this power, or if they allow its existence, they disbelieve its agency.

This tenet, however, so slightly regarded, is in every part of the New Testament, not barely noticed by allusion, but incessantly either peremptorily asserted, or constantly assumed. Would the apostle repeatedly refer us, as the only deliverer from sin, to an ideal person! Would he mock us by a bare statement of such a power, and an unmeaning promise of such a deliverance, without directing us how it is to be obtained? The fervent habitual prayer of faith is the mean suggested. It is rational to suppose that spiritual aid must be attained by a spiritual act. God is a spirit. Spirit and truth are the requisites expected in his worshippers.—Though this doctrine is insisted on not less than *twelve times* in this chapter only, there is not one tenet of Christianity, in the adoption of which, the generality are more reluctant.

It is unreasonable for us to say, we disbelieve the possibility of the operation of the Holy Spirit, because we do not understand when, or in what manner it acts, while we remain in such complete ignorance how our own spirits act within ourselves. It is proof sufficient, that we see its result, that we perceive the effect of this mysterious operation, in the actual change of the human heart.—Our sense of our internal weakness, must convince us, that it is not effected by any power of our own. The humble cannot but feel this truth, the ingenuous cannot but acknowledge it. Let us be assured, that Infi

nite Wisdom, which knows how we are constituted, and what are our wants, knows how his own Spirit assists those who earnestly implore its aid.

Saint Paul powerfully inculcates that new and spiritual worship which was so condescendingly and beautifully taught by the Divine Teacher, at the well of Sychar, when he declared that the splendours of the Temple worship, hitherto performed exclusively in one distinguished place, should be abolished, and the cumbrous ceremonies and fatiguing forms of the Jewish ritual set aside, to make way for a purer mode of adoration; when the contrite heart was to supersede the costly sacrifice, and God should be worshipped in a way more suited to his spiritual nature.*

Yet, even here, the wise moderation of Paul is visible. He did not manifest his dislike of one extreme point by flying to the antipodes of opposition: when ostentatious rites were pronounced to be no longer necessary, he did not adopt, like some other reformers, the contrary excess of irregularity and confusion. While the internal principle was the great concern, the outward appendage must be decorous. To keep the exterior 'decent' and 'orderly,' was emblematical of the purity and regularity within!

While Paul's severe reproof of the confusion and irregularities, which disgraced the Church of Corinth, proves him to be a decided enemy to the distempers of spiritual vanity and enthusiasm; he does not, like a worldly reprover, seize the occasion given by their imprudence to treat with levity the power of religion itself; he does not lay hold on the error he condemns for a pretence to deride true zeal, and to render ridiculous the gifts which had been indecently abused. On the contrary, he observes how improperly these gifts and supernatural powers had been used by some on whom they were conferred; who, he laments, were more anxious to eclipse each other in these showy distinctions, than to convert them to the purposes of practical use and excellence; advises, that 'spiritual gifts' may be directed to their true end; 'that he may excel to the edifying of the Church;' gently reminds the offenders that they themselves were nothing more than vehicles and organs of the operation of the Spirit. While he insinuates that, were these miraculous powers their sole distinction, it might be doubtful by what specific mark to recognize in them the genuine Christian; he removes the difficulty, by showing them there *was a more excellent way*, by which they might most indisputably make out their title. This 'way,' which is now as it was then, the discriminating characteristic of the true believer, is Charity; all the properties of which he describes, not for their instructions only, but for ours also.

If the apostle has here, on the one hand, furnished no example or apology for enthusiasm and eccentricity; if the solidity of his piety, and the sobriety of his mind, are uniformly opposed to the unprofitable fervours of fanaticism, both in doctrine and conduct, yet on the other hand his life and writings are quite as little favourable to a more formidable, because a less suspected and more common evil,—we mean indifference. Coldness and inefficiency, indeed, are, in the estimation of some persons, reputable, or at least safe qualities, and often obtain the honourable name of Prudence; but to Saint Paul it was not enough that nothing wrong was done; he considered it reproach sufficient that nothing was done.

He sometimes intrenches himself in the honest severity which his integrity compels him to exercise against the opposers of vital Christianity, by adducing some pointed censure against them from men of their own party or country. For instance, when he condemns, in his letter to their new bishop, Titus, the luxurious, avaricious, and slothful Cretans, he corroborates the truth of his testimony by the authority of one of their own poets, or prophets. These slow sensualists, these indulgers of appetite, these masters of ceremonies, he not only stigmatizes himself, but adds to his pagan quotation, 'This witness is true.' And it may be adduced as a striking instance of his discriminating mode of church government, that this wise ecclesiastical ruler, who had before exhorted Timothy, the bishop of another Church, to 'be gentle unto all men, meekly instructing those who oppose themselves,' now directs Titus to 'rebuke sharply' these temporizing teachers, and unholy livers.

He saw that a grave and sedate indolence, investing itself with the respectable attribute of moderation, eats out the very heart's core of piety. He knew that these somnolent characters communicate the repose which they enjoy; that they excite no alarm, because they feel none. Their tale of observances is regularly brought in; their list of forms is completely made out. Forms, it is true, are valuable things, when they are 'used as a dead hedge to secure the quick;' but here the observances are rested in; here the forms are the whole of the fence. The dead fence is not considered as a protection; but a substitute. The teacher and the taught, neither disturbing nor disturbed, but soothing and soothed, reciprocate civilities, exchange commendations. If little good is done, it is well; if no offence is given, it is better; if no superfluity of zeal be imputed, it is best of all. The Apostle felt what the Prophet expressed,—'My people love to have it so.'

Perhaps the sum and substance of the duties of a Christian minister, to which there is also a reference in this chapter, was never compressed into so small a compass as in his charge to his beloved Titus;*—'In all things showing *thyself a pattern of good works. In doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech.*' We see here, in a few significant words, a rule of conduct and of instruction which is susceptible of the widest expansion. The most elaborate paraphrase will add little to the substantial worth of this brief monition. Every instructor must furnish his own practical commentary by transferring into his life the pattern, and into his preaching the precept. He adds, the sure effect of a life and doctrine so correct

* Gospel of St. John, chap. iv

* Titus, ch. ii.

will be to silence calumny; the adversary of religion will be ashamed of his enmity when he sees the purity of its professor defeat all attempts to discredit him.

It is a truth, verified in every age of the church, that the doctrines which Paul preached, stood in direct opposition to the natural dispositions of man; they militated against his corrupt affections; they tended to subdue what had been hitherto invincible,—the stubborn human will; to plant self-denial where self-love had before overrun the ground. To convince of sin, to point to the Saviour, to perfect holiness, yet to exclude boasting, are the apostle's invariable objects. These topics he urges by every power of argument, by every charm of persuasion; by every injunction to the preacher, by every motive to the hearer; but these injunctions, neither argument, persuasion, nor motive, can ever render engaging.—Man loves to have his corruptions soothed; it is the object of the apostle to combat them: man would have his errors indulged; it is the object of the religion which Paul preached, to eradicate them.

Of the dislike excited against the loyal ambassadors of the Gospel, by those who live in opposition to its doctrines, our common experience furnishes us with no unapt emblem. When we have a piece of unwelcome news to report, we prepare the hearer by a soothing introduction; we break his fall by some softening circumstances; we invent some conciliatory preamble: he listens; he distrusts—but we arrive at the painful truth;—the secret is out, the preparation is absorbed in the reality, the evil remains in its full force; nothing but the painful fact is seen, heard, or felt.

'Thy news hath made thee a most ugly man.'

The apostle knew that it would afford little comfort to the humble Christian to talk of the mercy of God in the abstract, and the forgiveness of sins in vague and general terms. He persuades the believer to endeavour to obtain evidence of his own interest in this great salvation. The fountain of forgiveness may flow, but if the current reach not to us, if we have no personal interest in the offered redemption, if we do not individually seek communion with the Father of spirits, the Saviour of the world will not be our Saviour. But that he might not give false comfort, Paul, when he wishes 'peace' wishes 'grace' also; this last he always places first in order, knowing that, before the peace can be solid, it must have grace for its precursor. The character of the peace which he recommends is of the highest order of blessings. The peace which nations make with each other frequently includes no more than that they will do each other no evil; but 'the peace of God,' insures to us all that is good, by keeping our hearts and minds in the love and knowledge of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ!

In regard to Saint Paul's eccesiastical polity, we are aware that some persons, with a view to lower the general usefulness of his Epistles, object, that in many instances, especially in the second to the Corinthians, the apostle has limited his instructions to usages which relate only to the peculiar concerns of a particular church or individual person, and that they might been spared in a work meant for general cation.

But these are not, as some insist, mere controversies, obsolete disputes, with whi have no concern. Societies, as well as t dividuals of whom they are composed, are the same in all periods, and though the c tions of the churches which he addressed differ something in matter, and much in and ceremony, from those of modern dat the spirit of division, of animosity, of err opposition, with which all churches are m less infected, will have such a common r blance in all ages, as may make us subr take a hint or a caution even from topics may seem foreign to our concerns; and i to the value of Saint Paul's expostulation they may be made in some degree applica other cases.—His directions are minute, a as general, so as scarcely to leave any of t cidents of life, or the exigencies of societ tally unprovided for.

There are, it is obvious, certain things refer to particular usages of the general c at its first institution, which no longer There are frequent references to the extr nary gifts of the Spirit, and other circumst which though they have now ceased, a great importance, as connected with its hi and assisting in its first formation; and th ter who had neglected to have recorded would have been blameable, and the E which had not alluded to them would have imperfect.

While the apostle made ample provisions as the existing case required, or rather p ted, he did not absolutely legislate, as to nal things, for any church, wisely leaving tianity at liberty to incorporate herself wi laws of any country into which she mig introduced; and while the doctrines of th religion were precise, distinct, and defini ecclesiastical character was of that gener nature which would allow it to mix wit form of national government. This was a means both to promote its extension, and vent it from imbibing a political tempe spirit of interference with the secular cor of any country.

The wonder is, that the work is so little that it savours so little of Antioch or Jeru of Philippi or Corinth; but that almost all such general application: relative circums did indeed operate, but they always op subordinately.—The Epistle to the Eph is not marked with one local peculiarity. is not a single deduction to be made fro universal applicableness of this elegan powerful epitome of the Gospel.

Saint Paul belongs not particularly period in which he lived, but is equally th perty of each successive race of beings. does not diminish their interest in him. as fresh to every century as to his own; an truths he preaches will be as intimately nected with that age which shall precec dissolution of the world, as that in whi wrote. The sympathies of the real believe always be equally awakened by doctrines

will equally apply to their consciences, by principles which will always have a reference to their practice, by promises which will always carry consolation to their hearts. By the Christians of all countries Paul will be considered as a cosmopolite, and by those of all ages as a contemporary. Even when he addresses individuals, his point of view is mankind. He looked to the world as his scene, and to collective man as the actor.

CHAP. X.

The Style and Genius of Saint Paul.

Though Saint Paul frequently alludes to the variety of his sufferings, yet he never dwells upon them. He does not take advantage of the liberty so allowable in friendly letters—that of endeavouring to excite compassion by those minute details of distress, of which, but for their relation in the Acts of the Apostles, we should have been mainly ignorant.

How would any other writer than the Apostle have interwoven a full statement of his trials with his instructions, and how would he have indulged an egotism, not only so natural and so pardonable, but which has been so acceptable in those good men who have given us histories of their own life and times. That intermixture, however, which excites so lively an interest, and is so proper in Clarendon and Baxter, would have been misplaced here. It would have served to gratify curiosity, but might not seem to comport with the grave plan of instruction adopted by the apostle; whilst it comes with admirable grace from Saint Luke, his companion in travel.

Saint Paul's manner of writing will be found in every way worthy of the greatness of his subject. His powerful and diversified character of mind seems to have combined the separate excellences of all the other sacred authors—the loftiness of Isaiah, the devotion of David, the pathos of Jeremiah, the vehemence of Ezekiel, the didactic gravity of Moses, the elevated morality and practical good sense, though somewhat highly coloured, of Saint James; the sublime conceptions and deep views of Saint John, the noble energies and burning zeal of St. Peter. To all these he added his own strong argumentative powers, depth of thought and intensity of feeling. In every single department he was eminently gifted; so that what Livy said of Cato might with far greater truth have been asserted of Paul,—that you would think him born for the single thing in which he was engaged.

We have observed in an early chapter, that in the Evangelists the naked majesty of truth refused to owe any thing to the artifices of composition. In Paul's Epistles a due, though less strict degree of simplicity is observed; differing in style from the other as the comment from the text, a letter from a history; taking the same ground as to doctrine, devotion, and duty, yet branching out into a wider range, breaking the subject into more parts, and giving results instead of facts.

Though more at liberty, Paul makes a sober use of his privilege; though never ambitious of ornament, his style is as much varied as his subject, and always adapted to it. He is by turns vehement and tender, and sometimes both at once; impassioned, and didactic; now pursuing his point with a logical exactness, now disdaining the rules, of which he was a master; often making his noble neglect more impressive than the most correct arrangement, his irregularity more touching than the most lucid order. He is often abrupt, and sometimes obscure: his reasoning, though generally clear, is, as the best critics allow, sometimes involved, perhaps owing to the suddenness of his transitions, the rapidity of his ideas, the sensibility of his soul.

But complicated as his meaning may occasionally appear, all his complications are capable of being analyzed into principles; so that from his most intricate trains of reasoning, the most unlearned reader may select an unconnected maxim of wisdom, a position of piety, an aphorism of virtue, easy from its brevity, intelligible from its clearness, and valuable from its weight.

An apparent, though not unpleasing, disconnection in his sentences is sometimes found to arise from the absence of the conjunctive parts of speech. He is so affluent in ideas, the images which crowd in upon him are so thick-set; that he could not stop their course while he might tie them together. This absence of the connecting links, which in a meaner writer might have induced a want of perspicuity, adds energy and force to the expression of so spirited and clear-sighted a writer as our apostle. In the sixth chapter of the second of Corinthians, there are six consecutive verses without one conjunction. Such a particle would have enfeebled the spirit, without clearing the sense. The variety which these verses, all making up but one period, exhibit, the mass of thought, the diversity of object, the impetuosity of march, make it impossible to read them without catching something of the fervour with which they are written. They seem to set the pulse in motion with a corresponding quickness; and without amplification seem to expand the mind of the reader into all the immensity of space and time.

Nothing is diffused into weakness. If his conciseness may be thought, in a very few instances, to take something from his clearness, it is more than made up in force. Condensed as his thoughts are, the inexhaustible instructions that may be deduced from them, prove at what expansion they are susceptible. His compression has an energy, his imagery a spirit, his diction an impetuosity, which art would in vain labour to mend. His straight-forward sense makes his way to the heart more surely than theirs, who go out of their road for ornament. He never interrupts the race to pick up the golden bait.

Our apostle, when he has not leisure for reflection himself, almost by imperceptible methods invites his reader to reflect. When he appears only to skim a subject, he will suggest ample food for long-dwelling meditation. Every

sentence is pregnant with thought, is abundant in instruction. Witness the many thousands of sermons which have sprung from these comparatively few, but most prolific seeds. Thus, if he does not visibly pursue the march of eloquence by the critic's path, he never fails to attain its noblest ends. He is full without diffuseness, copious without redundance. His eloquence is not a smooth and flowing oil, which lubricates the surface, but a sharp instrument which makes a deep incision. It penetrates to the dissection of the inmost soul, 'to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.'

The numerous and long digressions often found, and sometimes complained of, in this great writer, never make him lose sight of the point from which he sets out, and the mark to which he is tending. From his most discursive flights he never fails to bring home some added strength to the truth with which he begins; and when he is longest on the wing, or loftiest in his ascent, he comes back to his subject enriched with additional matter, and animated with redoubled vigour. This is particularly exemplified in the third chapter of the Ephesians, of which the whole is one entire parenthesis, eminently abounding in effusions of humility, holiness, and love, and in the rich display of the Redeemer's grace.

In the prosecution of any discourse, though there may appear little method, he has frequently, besides the topic immediately in hand, some point to bring forward, not directly, but in an incidental, yet most impressive manner. At the moment when he seems to wander from the direct line of his pursuit, the object which he still has had in his own view, unexpectedly starts up before that of his hearer. In the recapitulation of the events of his life before Festus and Agrippa, when nothing of doctrine appears to be on his mind; he suddenly breaks out, 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?' He then resumes his narrative as rapidly as he had flown off from it; but returns to his doctrine at the close, with the additional circumstance, that 'Christ was the first that should rise from the dead;'—as if, having before put the question in the abstract, he had been since paving the way for the establishment of the fact.

Saint Paul is happy in a mode of brief allusion, and in the art of awakening recollection by hints. It is observable often, how little time he wastes in narrative, and how much matter he presses into a few words; 'Ye, brethren, have suffered the like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men,—forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved; to fill up their sins always—for the wrath is come upon them to the utmost.' What a quantity of history does this sketch present! What a picture of their character, their crimes, and their punishment!

Nor does this brevity often trench on his explicitness. In the fifth chapter of the first Thessalonians, from the fourteenth to the twentieth verse, there are no fewer than seventeen fundamental, moral, and religious monitions, comprising almost all the duties of a Christian life in the space of a few lines. The selection of his words is as apt, as his enumeration of duties is just. He *beseeches* his converts 'to know them that are over them, and very highly to esteem them in love for their works' sake;' while to the performance of every personal, social, and religious duty, he *exhorts* them.

The correctness of his judgment appears still more visibly in the aptness and propriety of all his allusions, metaphors, and figures. In his epistle to the Hebrews, he illustrates and enforces the new doctrine by reasonings drawn from a reference to the rites, ceremonies, and economy of the now obsolete dispensation; sending them back to the records of their early Scriptures. Again, he does not talk of the Isthmian games to the Romans, nor to the Greeks of Adoption. The latter term he judiciously uses to the Romans, to whom it was familiar, and explains, by the use of it, the doctrines of the grace of God in their redemption, their adoption as his children, and their 'inheritance with the saints in light;' on the other hand, the illustration borrowed from the rigorous abstinence which was practised by the competitors in the Grecian games; to fit them for athletic exercises, would convey to the most illiterate inhabitant of Achaia, a lively idea of the subjugation of appetite required in the Christian combatant. The close of this last mentioned analogy by the apostle, opens a large field for instruction, by a brief but beautiful comparison, between the value and duration of the fading garland worn by the victorious Greek, with the incorruptible crown of the Christian conqueror.

But whether it be a metaphor or illustration, or allusion, he seldom fails to draw from it some practical inference for his own humiliation. In the present case he winds up the subject with a salutary fear, in which all who are engaged in the religious instruction of others are deeply interested. So far is he from self-confidence or self-satisfaction, because he lives in the constant habit of improving others, that he adduces the very practice of this duty as a ground of caution to himself. He appropriates to himself a general possibility, 'lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.'

Another metaphor, to which for its peculiarity we cannot help making a distinct reference, occurs in the twelfth chapter of the first of Corinthians. The figure with which he there instructs the Church of Corinth in the nature, use, and variety of spiritual gifts, whilst it bears a strong resemblance to the celebrated apologue with which Menenius Agrippa appeased the tumult of the Roman populace in the infancy of the Consular government, is still much superior to it. Saint Paul reproves their dissentions in a long chain of argument, where he illustrates the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in his distribution of gifts, by a similitude taken from the component parts of the human body; which, though distinct and various, make up by union one harmonious whole. He explains their incorporation into Christ by the interest which the body has in the

several members, each of which by its specific office contributes to the general good. He proves the excellence of the dispensation to consist in that very variety which had produced the contention; and shows that, had the same powers been given to all, the union would have been broken as each portion would have been useless in a state of detachment from the rest, which now contributed to the general organization of the human frame.

As an orator, Paul unquestionably stands in the foremost rank. When the renowned Athenian so 'wielded the fierce democracy,' as to animate with one common sentiment the whole assembly against Philip; when his great rival stirred up the Roman senate against their oppressors, and by the power of his eloquence made Catalina contemptible, and Anthony detestable; they had every thing in their favour. Their character was established: each held a distinguished office in the state. They stood on the vantage-ground of the highest rank and reputation. When they spoke, admiration stood waiting to applaud. Their characters commanded attention. Their subject ensured approbation. Each, too, had the advantage of addressing his own friends, his own countrymen —men of the same religious and political habits with themselves. Before they started, they had already pre-occupied half the road to success and glory.

Now turn to Paul!—A stranger, poor, persecuted, unprotected, unsupported—despised before-hand, whether he were considered as a Jew or a Christian; solitary, defenceless, degraded even to chains—yet did he make the prejudiced king vacillate in his opinion, the unjust judge tremble on his seat. The Apostle of the Gentiles owed none of his success to an appeal to the corrupt passions of his audience. Demosthenes and Cicero, it must be confessed, by their arguments and their eloquence, but not a little also by their railing and invective, kindled strong emotions in the minds of their respective audiences. Now these vituperations, it must be remembered, were applied to other persons, not to the hearers,—and men find a wonderful facility in admiring satire not directed at themselves. But in the case of Saint Paul, the very persons addressed were at once the accused and the judges. The auditors were to apply the searching truths to their own hearts; to look inward on the mortifying spectacle of their own errors and vices: so that the apostle had the feelings of the hearers completely against him, whilst the Pagan orator had those of his audience already on his side.

To crown all, Saint Paul has nobly exemplified the rule of Quinctilian. He owed the best part of his oratory to his being a 'good man,' as well as a good speaker. 'Otherwise,' says that great critic, 'though the orator may amuse the imagination, he will never reach the heart.'

Conviction was the soul of his eloquence. He has no hesitation in his religious discussions. Whenever he summoned the attributes of his mind to council, decision always presided. His doctrines had a fixed system. There was nothing conjectural in his scheme. His mind was never erratic for want of a centre. 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' is the sun of his system, and round this centre every doctrine issuing from his lips, every grace beaming in his soul, moved harmoniously. Whilst he did not, like the exploded philosophy, invert order, by making the orb of day dependent on the lesser fires, which owe to him whatever light and heat they possess; he did not shrink, like the restorer of an astronomical truth, from the most decisive and effectual avowal of his opinions. It is curious to observe that both these persons shared a similar fate. The astronomer was rewarded for his discoveries with being thrown into prison by a pontiff of Rome; for the diffusion of moral light, the apostle was thrown into prison by an emperor of Rome. But mark, in the sequel, the superior influence of revealed truth over the conduct, to that of the clearest and best founded deductions of human reason. The philosopher was irresolute; the apostle persevered. Copernicus recanted what he knew to be truth, and was set free; Paul disdained liberty upon such terms and was put to death.

This resolute avowal, this predominant conviction of the sublimest of truths, enabled Saint Paul to throw into his eloquence a heart and a life unknown to other orators; 'as a dying man, he spoke to dying men;' and pleaded to the feelings of immortal beings for the life of their souls. Others have selected noble objects, objects well worthy their genius and their zeal,—the love of their country, liberty, and life. Paul embraced the same topics, but how ennobled in their nature! He taught his hearers 'to desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.' He showed them 'the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.' He pointed them to 'life everlasting.'

In the various counsels or reproofs founded upon these divine doctrines, can we be surprised at the frequent interruption of an ejaculation or an apostrophe which he seems wholly unable to repress? Often do we participate those feelings which, as it were, break in upon his most subdued moments, and impel him to magnify that name, which is above every name, with ascription of glory, and honour and praise, and sainted adoration: With a kindred joy and elevation of soul, we seem to make even the most highly wrought devotional and practical effusions of so great a writer our own: and so far from coldly condemning what we almost believe our own, we realize something of the observation of the finest critic of antiquity, 'that when the mind is raised by the true sublime, it rejoices and glories as if itself had produced what it had so much delight in contemplating.' 'No real Christian can read the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Ephesians, without being impressed and roused by it, as by the sound of a trumpet.'*

David, between whose temper and genius, and those of Saint Paul, there seems to have been a great resemblance, frequently manifests the same inextinguishable energy of soul. His heart, like that of the Apostle, is hot within him; the fire burns while he is musing. Many of the Psalms under such an influence become only one varied

* Macknight's Preface.

strain of laudatory prayer. In the nineteenth, for instance, he breaks out in admiration of the Divine law, almost to appearance on a sudden, and in such an inexhaustible diversity of expression, as if he could never unburden the fulness of his overflowing heart. He describes it in no less than six different forms of perfection: and with every form, still resembling his great fellow saint of after ages, he connects a practical deduction. Thus by an infinite variety he proves that his mental opulence is above tautology, and at the same time shows that spiritual riches should be devoted to moral purposes. 'The law of the Lord so extolled converts the soul,—gives wisdom to the simple,—rejoices the heart,—gives light to the eyes,—is not only true, but righteous altogether.'

If Paul indulges the glowing expression of his own gratitude, it is to communicate the sacred flame to those he addresses; if he triumphs in 'the enlargement of his own heart,' it is because he hopes by the infection of a holy sympathy to enlarge theirs. In catching, however, the sacred flame, let us never forget that, in his warmest addresses, in his most ardent expressions of grateful love to his God and his Saviour, he never loses sight of that soberness and gravity which becomes both his subject and his character. It is *the King eternal, immortal, invisible —the blessed and only potentate—King of kings, Lord of lords,—He who hath immortality—who dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto,—He who hath honour and power everlasting*, to whom, and of whom, he feels himself to speak.

May we venture to express a wish, that some persons of more piety and discernment, among whom there are those who value themselves on being more particularly the disciples of Saint Paul, would always imitate his chastised language. When the apostle pours out the fulness of his heart to his Redeemer, every expression is as full of veneration as of love. His freedom is a filial freedom, while *their* devout effusions are sometimes mixed with adjectives, which betrays a familiarity bordering on irreverence.*

'If I am a father, where is mine honour:- if I am a master, where is my fear?' They may indeed say with truth that they are invited to come *boldly* to the throne of grace. But does not the very word Throne imply majesty on the one part, and prostration on the other? Is not 'God manifest in the flesh' sometimes treated with a freedom, I had almost said a fondness, in which the divine part of his nature seems to be swallowed up in the human? Coarseness of whatever kind, may, it is true, be palliated by piety, but is never countenanced by it: it has no affinity to piety; it is only as the iron and the clay at the foot of the magnificent image, and is just so far removed from the true refinement and golden sanctity of taste, which will be learned by a due study of the first of models. If the persons so offending should plead warmth of affection, their plea will be admitted as valid, if in this feeling they can prove their superiority to their great master. In our own admirable church service, this scriptural soberness of style is most judiciously adopted, and uniformly maintained. Portions of it are indeed addressed to the Second Person in the blessed Trinity; but we look in vain for any familiar expression, any distinguishing appellative.

Much less do Saint Paul's writings present an example, to another and more elegant class, the learned speculatists of the German school, as recently presented to us by their eloquent and accomplished eulogist. Some of these have fallen into the opposite extreme of religious refinement; too airy to be tangible, too mystic to be intelligible. The apostle's religion is not like theirs, a shadowy sentiment, but a vital principle; not a matter of taste, but of conviction, of faith, of feeling. It is not a fair idea, but a holy affection. The deity at which they catch, is a gay and gorgeous cloud; Paul's is the Fountain of Light. His religion is definite and substantial, and more profound than splendid. It is not a panegyric on Christianity, but a homage to it.

He is too devout to be ingenious, too earnest to be fanciful, too humble to be inventive. His sober mind could discern no analogy between the sublime truths of Christianity and 'the fine arts.' Nor would he have compared the awful mysteries of the religion of Jesus with those of 'Free Masonry,' any more than he would have run a laboured parallel with the mysteries of Eleusis, or the Bona Dea. Nor does he love to illustrate the word of God by any thing but his works. His truth hath no shades; in Him, whatever is right is absolute. Nor does he ever make error perform the work of truth, by ascribing to 'enthusiasm' any of the good effects of religion. In the celestial armory of Christianity no such spiritual weapons as enthusiasm or error are to be found.

Had the Apostle placed the doctrines of revelation as congenial associates with the talent of poets and artists, he would have thought not only that it was a degradation of the principle of our faith, but an impeachment of the divine dispensations. God would have all men to be saved; Christ would have the gospel preached to every creature. Now if we compare the very small minority of ethereal spirits, who are fed by genius, who subsist on the luxuries of imagination, who are nurtured by music, who revel in poetry and sculpture, with the innumerable multitudes who have scarcely heard whether there be any such thing,—such a limited, such a whimsical, such an unintelligible, such an unattainable Christianity, would rob the mass of mankind of all present comfort, of all future hope. Paul would have thought it a mockery, when the Holy Spirit could alone help their infirmities, to have sent them to the Muses. To refer them to the statuary when they were craving for the bread of life, would be literally 'giving them stones for bread.' Nor would he have derided the wants of those who were 'thirsting for living water,' by sending him to the fountain of Aganippe.

To be more serious:—To have placed the vast majority of the human race out of the reach of privileges which Christianity professes to have made commensurate with the very ends of the earth, and to have adapted to every rational in-

* This remark applies more particularly to certain Hymns written in a very devout strain, but with a devotion rather amatory than reverential.

habitant on its surface, would have been as base and treacherous, unjust and narrow, as the totality of the actual design is vast and glorious.

Even had those few eminent men who ruled the empire of intellect in Greece and Rome, attained, by the influence of their philosophical doctrines, to perfection in practice, (which was far from being the case,) that would neither have advanced the general faith, nor improved the popular morals. In like manner, had Christianity limited its principles, and their consequent benefits, to evangelists and apostles, or to men of genius, how insignificant would have been her value in comparison of the effects of that boundless benevolence which commands the Gospel to be preached to all, without any distinction of rank or ability. Through this blessed provision the poorest Christian, rich in faith, can equally with Boyle or Bacon relish the beauty of holiness in the pages of Saint Paul, though he may not be rich enough in taste to discover its 'picturesque beauties,' as exhibited in the pages of some modern philosophic theologians.

Ours is a religion, not of ingenuity, but of obedience. As we must not omit any thing which God has commanded, so we must not invent devices which he does *not* command. The talent of a certain Lacedæmonian was not accepted as an excuse, when he added to his warlike instrument a string more than the state allowed. Instead of being commended for his invention, he was cashiered for his disobedience: so far from being rewarded for improving his music, he was punished for infringing the law.

Much were it to be wished, that these deep thinkers and brilliant writers, to whom we allude with every consideration for their talents, would make their immense mental riches subservient to their spiritual profit: and as Solon made his commercial voyages the occasion of amassing his vast intellectual treasures, so that *they* would consecrate their literary wealth, and devote their excursions into the regions of fancy to the acquisition of the one pearl of great price.

Too often persons of fine genius, to whom Christianity begins to present itself, do not so much seek to penetrate its depths, where alone they are to be explored, in the unerring word of God, as in their own pullulating imaginations. Their taste and their pursuits have familiarized them with the vast, and the grand, and the interesting: and they think to sanctify these in a way of their own. The *feeling of the Infinite* in nature, and the beautiful in art; the flights of poetry, of love, of glory, alternately elevate their imagination, and they denominate the splendid combination, Christianity. But 'the new cloth' will never assort with 'the old garment.'

These elegant spirits seem to live in a certain lofty region in their own minds, where they know the multitude cannot soar after them; they derive their grandeur from this elevation, which separates them with the creature of their imagination, from all ordinary attributes, and all associations of daily occurrence. In this middle region, too high for earth, and too low for heaven; too refined for sense, and too gross for spirit; they keep a magazine of airy speculations, and shining reveries, and puzzling metaphysics; the chief design of which is to drive to a distance, the profane vulgar; but the real effect to separate themselves and their system from all intercourse with the wise and good.

God could never intend we should disparage his own gift, his highest natural gift, intellectual excellence. But knowing that those who possessed it, would be sufficiently forward, not only to value the talent, but to overvalue themselves for possessing it, he knew also that its possessors would require rather repression than excitement. Accordingly, we do not recollect an eulogy on mere intellectual ability either in the Old or the New Testament. In the Old, indeed, there is the severe censure of a Prophet on its vain exercise; 'thy wisdom and thy knowledge have perverted thee;' and in the New, the only mention of 'high imaginations,' is accompanied with an injunction, 'to cast them down,' and this in order to the great and practical end of 'bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.'

Saint Paul was deeply sensible of the necessity of circumscribing the passions, the powers, and the genius of men within due limits. He knew that they were not to be trusted to their own operation, without positive institutions, fixed laws, prescribed bounds. To subdue the pride and independence of the human heart, he knew to be no less requisite than to tame the sensual appetites. He was aware, that to fill the imagination with mere pictures of heroic virtue would not suffice for a creature like man, under the influence of that disorderly and inflammable faculty, without the infusion of holy habits, and the prescription of specific duties and defined rules. In fine, the discipline of Paul learns not so much to give play to his fancy, as to submit his will; and the first question which seems presented in his pages is not this, 'How bright are thy conceptions?' but 'How readest thou?'

The subject is too important, as a matter of caution, not to be placed in every possible light. Let us remember then that admiration is not conviction. There is something in perfection of every kind, which lays hold on a heart glowing with strong feelings, and a mind imbued with true taste. On this ground, even Rousseau could be the occasional eulogist of Christianity. He could institute a comparison between the son of Sophroniscus and the Son of Mary, with a pen, which seems plucked by a fallen spirit from a seraph's wing. His fine imagination was fired with the sublime of Christianity, as it would have been with a dialogue of Plato, a picture of Raffaelle, or any exhibition of ideal beauty.

Longinus, a still more accomplished critic in intellectual beauty than Rousseau, amongst the various illustrations of his doctrine in his beautiful work, quotes the Almighty fiat at the creation, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' as a perfect instance of the sublime. He calls it 'a just idea, and a noble expression of the power of God.' Yet, though struck with this passage of the Jewish legislator, whom he coolly calls, 'no ordinary person, he was satisfied with

the beauty of the sentiment without examining into that truth which is the spring and fountain of all beauty. Though he lived so late as the third century, yet he does not appear to have inquired into the truth of the Christian revelation; and thus but too lamentably demonstrated, that the taste may give its most favourable verdict to a system which had yet made no impression on the heart.

Saint Paul found in the wants of man something that could not be supplied; in his sorrows, something that could not be consolated; in his lapse, something that could not be restored by elegant speculation or poetic rapture. He found that the wounds inflicted by sin could not be healed by the grace of composition; and that nothing but the grace of the Gospel could afford a remedy adequate to the demand. Let us, then, give our willing admiration to every species of true genius. Let us retain our taste for what is really excellent even in heathen models. But when called upon to identify the impressions of taste with the infusions of piety, let us boldly reply with the Prophet, 'What has Ephraim to do any more with Idols?'

CHAP. XI.

Saint Paul's Tenderness of Heart.

Among the peculiarities of Christianity, it is one of the most striking, that they who, in Scripture language, love not the world, nor the things of the world, are yet the persons in it who are farthest from misanthropes. They love the beings of whom the world is composed, better than he who courts and flatters it. They seek not its favour nor its honours, but they give a more substantial proof of affection,—they seek its improvement, its peace, its happiness, its salvation.

If ever man, on this ground, had a pre-eminent claim to the title of philanthropist, that man is the Apostle Paul. The warmth of his affections, as exhibited in a more general view, in the narrative of Saint Luke, and the tenderness of his feelings, as they appear more detailed throughout his own Epistles, constitute a most interesting part of his very diversified character.

This truth is obvious, not only on great and extraordinary occasions, but in the common circumstances of his life, and from the usual tenor of his letters.

There are persons, not a few, who, though truly pious, defeat much of the good they intend to do, not always by a natural severity of temper, but by a repulsiveness of manner, by not cultivating habits of courtesy, by a neglect of the smaller lenient acts of kindness. They will indeed confer the obligation, but they confer it in such a manner as grieves and humbles him who receives it. In fulfilling the letter of charity, they violate its spirit. We would not willingly suspect, that if they are more averse from bestowing commendation, than from receiving it, a little envy, unsuspected by themselves, mixes with this reluctance. But be this as it may, tender spirits and feeling hearts, especially in the first stages of their religious course, require the fostering air of kindness and encouragement. They are not able to go alone, they need the soothing voice and the helping hand. They are ready to suspect that they are going wrong, if not occasionally encouraged to believe that they are going right.

History presents us with numberless instances, in which the success or the failure of great enterprises has depended, not altogether on the ability, but partly on the temper of him who conducted it. The importance of conciliatory and engaging manners is no where more strikingly illustrated than by the opposite conduct and different success of two famous Athenian generals. Plutarch observes, that though Pericles and Nicias both pursued the same end, the former, in the progress of his purpose, always won the people by his kind and insinuating address; while the latter, not employing the mild powers of persuasion, exasperated instead of winning them over, and thus commonly failed in his enterprise.

Paul's consummate knowledge of human nature, no less than his tenderness of heart, led him to encourage in his young converts early opening promise of goodness. He carefully cultivates every favourable symptom. He is 'gentle among them as a nurse cherisheth her children.' He does not expect every thing at once; he does not expect that a beginner in the ways of religion should start into instantaneous perfection. He does not think all is lost if an error is committed; he does not abandon hope, if some less happy converts are slow in their progress. He protects their budding graces, he fences his young plants till they have had time to take root; as they became strong he exposes them to the blast. If he rejoices that the hardy are more flourishing, he is glad that the less vigorous are nevertheless alive.

Characters which are great are not always amiable; the converse is equally true; in Saint Paul there is an union of both qualities. He condescends to the inferior distresses, and consults the natural feelings of his friends, as much as if no weightier cares pressed on his mind. There is scarcely a more lovely part of his character, though it may be less striking to the common eyes, as being more tender than great than the gentleness exhibited to his Corinthian converts; where he is anxious before he appears among them again that any breach might be healed, and every painful feeling done away, which his sharp reproof of an offending individual might have excited. He would not have the joyfulness of their meeting overshadowed by any remaining cloud.

Though he expresses himself in the most feeling manner, lest he might have given them pain by his severe reproofs in a preceding letter, yet instantly the predominating integrity of his mind leads him to take comfort in the reflection, that this temporary sorrow had produced the most salutary effects on them who felt it. His rejoicing that the very sorrow he had excited was a religious sorrow,—his reflections on the beneficial results of this affliction,—on the repentance it had produced, the distinction between this and worldly sorrow,—his

generous energy in enumerating the several instances in which this good effect had appeared; 'yea, what carefulness is wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear,' and the animating conclusion, that 'in all things they had proved themselves to be clear in the matter;' all afford a proof of his being on the watch to lay hold of any possible occasion, on which to build instruction, as well as to graft consolation.

No one ever possessed more nearly in perfection, the virtuous art of softening the severity of the censure he is obliged to inflict, no one ever more combined flexibility of manner with inflexibility of principle. He takes off the edge of reproof by conveying it negatively. To give a single instance out of many, when he thought some of his converts had acted improperly, instead of saying I blame you, he adopts a mitigating phrase, 'I praise you not.' This address would prepare them to receive with more temper the censure to which it is an introduction.

Of this Christian condescension each successive example furnishes us with a most engaging and beautiful model for our own conduct. With what deep regret does he allude to the necessity under which he had been of animadverting severely on the atrocious instance of misconduct above-mentioned! With what truth and justice does he make it appear that reproofs, which are so painful to the censor, are a more certain evidence of friendship, than commendations, which it would have given to him as much joy to have bestowed, as to them to have received! An important admonition to all, to those especially whose more immediate concern it is to watch over the conduct of others, that though this most trying duty should never be neglected by them, yet that the integrity which obliges them to point out faults, should be exercised in a manner so feeling as to let the offender see, that they have no pleasure in adopting harsh measures; of this truth they give the surest proof by the joy with which, like the apostle, they welcome the returning penitent back to virtue.

Observe the delicacy of his distinctions,—he wrote to them *out of much affliction and anguish of heart;* not that he wished to grieve them by a display of his own sorrow, but that they might judge by it *of the abundant love he had for them.* Nor does he, as is the vulgar practice, blame a whole community for the faults of individuals: *I am grieved but in part, that I may not overcharge you all.* Mark his justice in separating the offending party from the mass. Is not this a hint against an indiscriminate mode of attack? Do we not occasionally hear one audience addressed as if it were composed entirely of saints, and another, as if all were grossly impenitent sinners?

Having received sufficient proofs of the obedience of the community in inflicting the punishment, and of the penitence of the offender in submitting to it, he was now not only anxious for his restoration, but for his comfort. He sets a most amiable example of the manner in which the contrite spirit should be cheered, and the broken heart bound up. No one was ever more studious than Saint Paul, to awaken contrition; none more eager to heal its pangs.

Want of consideration is an error into which even good men sometimes fall. They do not always enter intimately into the character and circumstances of the persons they address. Saint Paul writes to his friends like one that felt, because he partook the same fallen humanity with them: like one who was familiar with the infirmities of our common nature, who could allow for doubt and distrust, for misapprehension and error; who expected inconsistency, and was not deterred by perverseness; who bore with failure where it was not wilful, and who could reprove obduracy, without being disappointed at meeting with it. In Saint Paul, the heart of flesh was indeed substituted for the heart of stone.

Our spiritual strength is invigorated by the retrospection of our former errors.—Saint Paul's tenderness for his converts was doubtless increased by the remembrance of his own errors; a remembrance which left a compassionate feeling on his impressible heart. It never, however, led him to be guilty of that mischievous compassion of prefering the ease of his friends to their safety. He never soothed where it was his duty to reprove. He knew that integrity was the true tenderness; that a harsh truth, which might tend to save the soul, had more humanity than a palliative which might endanger it.

From this intimate knowledge of the infirmities even of good men, he had such a conviction of the possibility of relaxing in religious strictness, that he scrupled not to express his fears to his Corinthian friends, that when he came among them, 'he should not find them such as he would;' in order to soften, he divides the blame, by fearing, that 'he should be found of them such as they would not.' Knowing, too, that the temper was more under control, and irritation less easily excited, by epistolary than by verbal communication; when he expresses his fears that at their meeting he might find among them 'debates, envyings, wrath, swellings,' he tenderly apologizes for expressing his apprehensions, *because lest in conversation he might use sharpness.* In his most severe animadversions he does not speak of any with hopeless harshness. He seldom treats the bad as irreclaimable, but generally contrives to leave them some remains of credit. He seems to feel that by stripping erring men of every vestige of character, he should strip them also of every glimmering of hope, of every incitement to reformation. It is indeed almost cutting off any chance of a return to virtue, when we do not leave the offender some remnant of reputation to which he may still be led to act up. May not this preservation from despair lead to the operation of a higher principle? Though Timothy is exhorted to have no company with him who obeys not the word of Paul's Epistle, the prohibition is only in order 'that he may be ashamed;' 'yet is he not to be accounted as an enemy, but exhorted as a brother.'

As there seems to have been no church which had fallen into such important errors as that of Corinth, and consequently none where more pointed reproof was necessary, so in no Epistle is there more preparatory soothing, more conci-

liatory preliminaries to the counsels or the censures he is about to communicate. He tells them that 'in every thing they are enriched,'—'that they come behind in no gift,' before he reprehends them for their contentious spirit, for their divisions, for their strifes. Thus, though the reproof would be keenly felt, it would not be met with a spirit previously exasperated—a spirit which those reprovers infallibly excite, who by indiscriminate upbraiding stir up the irascible passions at the outset, shut up every avenue to the kind affections, and thus deprive the offender of that patient calmness with which he might otherwise have profited by the reproof.

This intimate feeling of his own imperfection is every where visible. It makes him more than once press on his friends, the Christian duty of bearing one another's burdens, intimating how necessary this common principle of mutual kindness was, as they themselves had so much to call forth the forbearance of others. In his usual strain of referring to first motives, he does not forget to remind them, that it was fulfilling the law of Christ.

As the ardent zeal of Saint Paul led him into no enthusiasm, so the warmth of his affections never blinded his judgment. Religion did not dry up, as it is sometimes accused of doing, the spring of his natural feeling; his sensibility was exquisite; but the heart which felt all, was quickened by an activity which did all, and regulated by a faith which conquered all.

His sorrows and his joys, both of which were intense, never seem to have arisen from any thing which related merely to himself. His own happiness or distress were little influenced by personal considerations; the varying condition, the alternate improvement or declension of his converts alone, could sensibly raise or depress his feelings. With what anguish of spirit does he mourn over some, 'of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.' Mark again his self-renouncing joy—'We are glad when we are weak and ye are strong.' Again, 'Let me rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.'

When he expressed such a feeling sense of distress, upon the interesting occasion of taking his departure for Jerusalem, 'the Holy Ghost witnessing in every city that bonds and imprisonment awaited him,'* still he felt no concern for his own safety. No: he anticipated without terror his probable reception there. With a noble disregard of all personal considerations, he exclaims, 'but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.'†

If none of these things moved him, then whence arose the sorrow he so keenly felt? It arose from no selfish cause; it was from a consideration far superior to that tender feeling, that they should meet no more, though that too he would deeply regret; it was occasioned by reflection the future condition of the church, and a prophetic view of that corruption of doctrine to which he foresaw his beloved converts would be soon exposed.

There is something singularly beautiful in the dignity, simplicity, and godly sincerity of this apostolic charge, to which we allude.—With humble confidence, he refers his audience to their own knowledge of his whole conduct. He assures them, that neither any fears of the insidious Jews, always on the watch to circumvent him, nor the hostility of the idolatrous Gentiles, always ready to oppose him, had ever driven him to withhold any important truth, any salutary admonition. He slightly touches on the two fundamental truths on which all his instructions had been built, *faith and repentance:* then he reminds them, that not satisfied with the public exercise of his function, he had practised that subsidiary and valuable method of instruction—private visits at the houses of individuals—a method equally practicable in all ages of the church; equally desirable to all who wish to gain a real acquaintance, in the intervals of public service with the necessities, the infirmities, and the sins of their respective hearers. This would enable him to perform his stated ministrations with ten-fold effect. It would initiate him into the endless variety of characters of which every audience is composed; it would enable the teacher to be more personal in his exhortations, more pointed in his reproofs, more specific in his instruction, than he could be when he addressed them in the great assembly. It would also qualify him for more extensive usefulness in those public addresses by the materials which he was thus collecting. It would be among the means also to win their affection and increase their attachment, when they saw that his zeal for their spiritual advancement was large and cordial; that he did not content himself with the stipulated scantling of bare weight duty; that he did not deal out his instruction with a legal scrupulosity, but was willing to spend, and desirous to be spent, for them.

With what a holy satisfaction did the conscience of the apostle further testify that no desire of pleasing, no fear of offending, had prevented him from delivering wholesome truths, because they might be unpalatable! What an awful intimation to every ambassador of Christ, that this indefatigable apostle, at the moment of final separation, could call on all present to testify that whatever might have been the negligence of the hearer, the preacher 'was pure from the blood of all men;' that he had never been guilty of that false tenderness, of not declaring to them the whole counsel of God! He appeals to his disinterestedness, that, so far from being influenced by any lucrative motive, he had laboured with his own hands, not only to support himself, but to assist the poor. How touching, no doubt to his hearers, was the intimation, that the same hands which had been raised for them in prayer, had been employed for their support!

This modest allusion to his own liberality, and to the personal labour which had enabled him to exercise it, was a proper parting lesson. It reminded his auditors, that no part of his re-

* Acts, xx.

† We make no apology for the repeated references to this portion of this most interesting chapter.

ligien was merely theoretical. He had, doubtless, frequently insisted on the principle; he here shows them its practical effect; in this, as in other instances, pressing home every truth he taught by every virtue he exercised.

He concludes with a powerful application to his associates in the ministry, to whom he was about to commit the care of the people. The tender grief, the grateful sympathy, the prayers, the tears, and embraces of the afflicted audience, 'sorrowing most because they should see his face no more,' bore a truer testimony to the fidelity of the preacher, than the most elaborate eulogy on his style or manner; and doubtless afforded a higher test of excellence, than any temporary effect, produced by an artificial harangue, which, while it fills the hearer with admiration of the preacher, leaves his own conscience untouched, his own heart unhumbled.

He then bequeaths, as a kind of dying legacy, the people to their ministers; affectionately exhorting the latter, first; to 'take heed to themselves,' as the only sure earnest of their taking heed to their flock, strengthening his exhortation 'to feed the church of God,' by a motive at once the most powerful and the most endearing, because *he hath purchased it with his own blood.*

In that great and terrible day of the Lord when the glorious Head of the Church shall summon the assembled universe to judgment, among the myriads who shall tremblingly await their own definitive sentence, how will the exploring eye of men and angels be turned on the more prominent and public characters, who, from rank, profession, talent, or influence, were invested with superior responsibility! What individual among these distinguished classes will be able to endure the additional load of other men's sins, brought forward to swell his personal account.

Though it is not easy to image to the mind a more touching event than this parting scene of Christian friends on the shores of Ephesus, yet there is one to come of far higher interest, that of their re-union;—that august scene, when the pastor and his flock shall appear together, at the call of the Chief Shepherd,—when the servants of the Universal Master,—'they who have sought that which was lost, and brought again that which was driven away, and bound up that which was broken, and strengthened that which was sick,'* shall deliver up to Him who laid down his life for the sheep, that flock 'which he will require at their hands.'

Yes! among the candidates for a blessed immortality will stand awfully pre-eminent the band of Christian ministers, each surrounded by 'the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer,' every one of whom had sacramentally declared, at his introduction into the fold, that he undertook the sacred office in obedience to that solemn call.† What a sound, 'Well done good and faithful servant!' to him who shall have acquitted himself of his tremendous responsibility! What a spectacle?—multitudes entering into the joy of their Lord, gratefully ascribing their opening and inconceivable felicity to the zeal, the fidelity, the prayers of their pastor. For them, to resume the beautiful metaphors of the Holy Book,—for them, *the green pastures*, into which they had conducted their flock, shall flourish in everlasting verdure; for them, *the waters of comfort, beside which they had led them*, shall flow from a source which eternity cannot exhaust, from those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore.

If this spectacle *has* a contrast, we avert our eyes from the contemplation. If even the picture is too terrible to be sketched, who could stand the possibility of its being realized?

This whole valedictory address to the elders of Ephesus combines every beauty of composition: it exhibits an energy, a devotion, a resignation, an integrity, a tenderness, which cannot be sufficiently admired. And the more intimately to touch their hearts by mixing the remembrance of the friend with the injunctions he had delivered, he not only refers them to the doctrines which he had taught, but the tears which he had shed.

There is nothing like stoical indifference. Nothing like a contempt of the sensibilities of nature, in his whole conduct; and it furnishes a proof how happily magnanimity and tenderness blend together, that as there is probably no character in history which exhibits a more undaunted heroism than that of Saint Paul, so there is perhaps not one whose tears are so frequently recorded. 'What mean ye to weep and break my heart?' is an interrogatory as intelligible to us in the character of Paul, as the heroic declaration, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.' What ground, then, is there for that charge so frequently brought against persons of eminent piety, that they are destitute of natural feeling. The Old Testament Saints were striking examples of domestic tenderness.

When Paul exhorts his converts 'to stand fast in the Lord,' he declares his own participation in the blessings of this steadfastness, in terms the most endearing—'dearly beloved and longed for, my crown and joy, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved;'—as if he would add to the motives of their perseverance, the transport it would afford to himself. His very existence seems to depend on their steadfastness in piety —'for now we *live* if ye stand fast in the Lord.' Again, as a proof how dear his converts were to him, he was desirous of imparting to them *not only the Gospel of God, but also his own soul.*

The spirit of Christianity is no where more apparent than in the affectionate strain in which he adjures his Roman friends only to consent to save their own souls. One would suppose it was not the immortal happiness of others, but his own, which so earnestly engaged him. How fervently tender is his mode of obtesting them! 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God'—'I Paul by myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.'* As the representative of his master, he implores of man the reconciliation for which it would be natural to expect that man himself, whose own concern it is, should be the solicitor.

Saint Paul's zeal for the spiritual welfare of

* Ezekiel, ch. xxxiv. 16.

† See the Ordination Service.

* Romans xii. 1.

whole communities, did not swallow up his ardent attachment to individuals; nor did his regard to their higher interest lead him to overlook their personal sufferings. He descends to give particular advice to one friend* respecting the management of his health. In his grief for the sickness of another,† and his joy at his recovery, he does not pretend to a feeling purely disinterested, but gratefully acknowledges that his joy was partly for his own sake,' 'lest he should have sorrow upon sorrow.' These soft touches of sympathy for individuals particularly dear to him, in a man so like-minded with Christ, in the instances of Lazarus and John, are a sufficient refutation of the whimsical assertion of a lively genius; that particular friendships are hostile to the spirit of Christianity.‡

The capacious heart of this blessed apostle was so large as to receive into it all who loved his Lord. The salutations with which most of his Epistles close, and the affectionate remembrances which they convey, include perhaps the names of a greater number of friends, than any dozen of Greek or Roman heroes, in the plenitude of success and power, ever attracted; if we may judge in the one case by the same rule as in the other, the narrative of history, or the writings of biographical memoirs.

But his benevolence was not confined to the narrow bounds of friends or country.—*He was a man*, and nothing that involved the best interests of man was indifferent to him. A most beautiful comparison has been drawn by as fine a genius as has adorned this or any age, between the learned and not illaudable curiosity which has led so many ingenious travellers to visit distant and dangerous climes, in order 'to contemplate mutilated statues and defaced coins; to collate manuscripts, and take the height of pyramids,' with the zeal which carried the late martyr of humanity on a more noble pilgrimage, 'to search out infected hospitals, to explore the depth of dungeons, and to take the guage of human misery' in order to relieve it.

Without the unworthy desire to rob this eminent philanthropist of his well earned palm, may we not be allowed to wish, that the exquisite eulogist of Howard had also instituted a comparison which would have opened so vast a field to his eloquent pen, between the adventurous expeditions of the conqueror, the circumnavigator, the discoveror, the naturalist, with those of Paul, the martyr of the gospel? Paul, who, renouncing ease and security, sacrificing fame and glory, encountering 'weariness and painfulness, watching, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness; was beaten with rods, frequent in prisons, in deaths oft, was once stoned, thrice suffered shipwreck, was a day and a night in the deep,'* went from shore to shore, and from city to city, knowing that bonds and imprisonment awaited him; and for what purpose? He, too, was a discoverer, and in one sense a naturalist. He explored not indeed the treasures of the mineral, nor the varieties of the vegetable world. His business was with man; his object the discovery of man's moral wants; his study, to apply a proportionate remedy; his work, to break up the barren ground of the human soil; his aim, to promote the culture of the undisciplined heart; his end, the salvation of those for whom Christ died. He did not bring away one poor native to graft the vices of a polished country on the savage ignorance of his own; but he carried to the natives themselves the news, and the means of eternal life.

He was also a conqueror, but he visited new regions, not to depopulate, but to enlighten them. He sought triumphs, but they were over sin and ignorance. He achieved conquests; but it was over the prince of darkness. He gained trophies, but they were not military banners, but rescued souls. He erected monuments, but they were to the glory of God. He did not carve his own name on the rocky shore, but he engraved that of his Lord on the hearts of the people. While conflicting with want, and struggling with misery, he planted churches; while sinking under reproach and obloquy, he erected the standard of the Cross among barbarians, and (far more hopeless enterprize!) among philosophers; and having escaped with life from the most uncivilized nations, was reserved for martyrdom in the imperial queen of cities!

CHAP. XII.

Saint Paul's Heavenly Mindedness.

True religion consists in the subjugation of the body to the soul, and of the soul to God. The apostle every where shows, that by our apostacy this order is destroyed, or rather inverted. At the same time he teaches, that though brought into this degraded state by our own perverseness, we are not hopelessly abandoned to it. He not only shows the possibility, but the mode of our restoration, and describes the happy condition of the restored, even in this world, by declaring, that *to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

He knew that our faculties are neither good nor evil in themselves, but powerful instruments for the promotion of both; active capacities for either, just as the bent of our character

* Timothy. † Epaphroditus.

‡ It is however a debt of justice due to a departed friend to observe, that no suspicion could be more unfounded than that Mr. Soame Jenyns was not sincere in his profession of Christianity. The author lived much in his very pleasant society, and is persuaded that he died a sincere Christian. He had a peculiar turn of humour; he delighted in novelty and paradox, and perhaps brought too much of both into his religion. Ingenious men will sometimes be ingenious in the wrong place. If he lays too much stress on some things, and underrates others; if he mistakes or overlooks even fundamental points, so that some of his opinions must appear defective to the experienced Christian; yet the general turn of his work on the Internal Evidence of Christianity may render it useful to others, by inviting them by the very novelty of his manner to consult a species of evidence to which they have not been accustomed. A sceptical friend of the writer of these pages, who had stood out against the argument of some of the ablest divines, was led by this little work to examine more deeply into Internal Evidence; it sent him to read his Bible in a new spirit. He followed up his inquiries, consulted authors whose views were more matured, and died a sound believer.

* 2 Corinthians, ch. xi.

is determined by the predominance of religion or of sin, of the sensual or the spiritual mind. Saint Paul eminently exhibited, both in his example and in his writings, the spiritual mind. He was not only equal in correctness of sentiment and purity of practice with those who are drily orthodox, and superior to those who are coldly practical; but he 'perfects holiness in the fear of God.' He abounds in the heavenly mindedness which is the uniting link between doctrinal and practical piety, which, by the unction it infuses into both, proves that both are the result of Divine grace; and which consists in an entire consecration of the affections, a voluntary surrender of the whole man to God.

This disposition the apostle makes the preliminary to all performance, as well as the condition of all acceptance. This it is which constitutes the charm of his writings. There is a spirit of sanctity which pervades them, and which, whilst it affords the best evidence of the love of God shed abroad in his own heart, infuses it also into the heart of his readers. While he is musing, the fire burns, and communicates its pure flame to every breast susceptible of genuine Christian feeling. Under its influence his arguments become persuasions, his exhortations entreaties. A sentiment so tender, and earnestness so imploring, breathes throughout them, that it might seem that all regard for himself, all care for his own interests, is swallowed up in his ardent and affectionate concern for the spiritual interest of others.

The exuberance of his love and gratitude, the fruits of his abundant faith, break out almost in spite of himself. His zeal reproves our timidity, his energy our indifference. 'He dwells,' as an eloquent writer has remarked, 'with almost untimely descant,' on the name of Him who had called him out of darkness into his marvellous light. That name which we are so reluctant to pronounce, not through reverence to its possessor, but fear of each other, ever sounds with holy boldness from the lips of Paul. His bursts of sacred joy, his triumphant appeals to the truth of the promises, his unbounded confidence in the hope set before him, carry an air not only of patience, but of victory, not only of faith, but of fruition.

Whoever desires more particularly to compare this spirit of Divine power manifested by the apostle, with the opposite spirit of the world, let him carefully peruse the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. After describing the strong and painful conflict with the malignant power of sin in the seventh chapter, with what a holy exultation does he, in the opening of the eighth, hurry in, as it were, the assurance that 'there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' It somewhat resembles that instant, I had almost said, that impatient, mercy of God in the third of Genesis, which seems eager to make the promise follow close upon the fall, the forgiveness upon the sin; to cut off the distressing space between terror and joy, to leave no interval for despair. God, who is so patient when he is to punish, is not so patient when he is to save. He delays to strike, but he hastes to pardon. 'After the first offence,' says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, 'God could not stay from redeeming;' nor could Paul stay from proclaiming that we *are* redeemed. The apostle, like his Creator, loses not a moment to comfort the soul which he has been afflicting.

In this divine effusion we at once discern the difference between natural weakness and superadded strength; between the infirmities which are fortified by the assistance of the Spirit, and the sensual mind, which not only is not, but cannot be subject to the law of God; between him who not having 'the Spirit of Christ, is none of his,' and him in whom 'Christ, the spirit of life, dwells;' between him, who, if he yield to the pleasures of sense, shall die, and him who, through the Spirit mortifying the deeds of the body shall live.

It is worth observing, that he does not make the line of demarcation between the two classes of characters, to consist merely in the actual crimes and grosser vices of the one class, and the better actions of the other. It is to the sensual and spiritual *mind*, the fountain of good and evil deeds, to which he refers as the decisive test. This radical distinction he further conceives to be a more obvious line of separation than even any difference of religious opinions, any distinction arising from the mere adoption of peculiar dogmas.

That the reviving assurance may appear to belong exclusively to real Christians, he marks the change of character by the definite tense *now*, implying their recent victory over their old corruptions, which he had been deploring. This precaution would prevent those, who remained in their former state from taking to themselves the comfort of a promise in which they have no part. He guards it still more explicitly, by declaring, that the true evidence of this renovation of heart, was their *walking* after the Spirit; a term which describes habitual progress in the new way, to which we are conducted by the new nature, and which, if it do not always preserve us from deviating from it, recalls us back to it.

The power Paul felt; and on this principle he wrote; and he never wrote on any principle on which he did not act. After he had carried piety to the most heroic elevation; after he had pressed the most fervent exertions on others, and gained the splendid conquests over himself, still he considered himself only in the *road* to salvation; still he never thought of slackening his course; he thought not of resting; he had not reached his end. He was not intimidated from pursuing it by new difficulties; his resolution rose with his trials; all he feared for himself, all against which he cautioned others, was declension; his grand solicitude for them and for himself was, that they might not lose the ground they had gained. He well knew, that even the present position could not be long maintained without the pursuit of farther conquests. He *walked* after the Spirit.

The terrible forms of distress which he summons to view in this, as well as in other parts of his Epistles, always remind him of the principle which makes them supportable. He enumerates human miseries in all their variety of shapes,—*tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword.* But to what end

does he muster this confederate band of woes? He calls on them not to assert the sufferings they inflict; no, he challenges them to separate the Christian sufferer *from the love of Christ.* He presents himself to us as an instance of the supreme triumph of this love over all earthly calamity. The man whose *distresses abounded*, who was *pressed above measure*, comes out of the conflict, not only a conqueror,—that to one of his ardent spirit seemed too poor a triumph, *he is more than a conqueror.* But how is this victory achieved? *Through him who loved us.* That lowliness which made him say just before, 'that which I do I allow not, but what I hate that I do,' must have been lifted by a mighty faith when he exclaimed, 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

In speaking, in this chapter, of the glories of the eternal world, his rapture does not escape him as the sally of the imagination, as a thought awakened by a sudden glance of the object; he does not express himself at random from the impulse of the moment; his is not the conjectural language of ignorant desire, of uncertain hope; it is an assumption of the sober tone of calculation. 'I reckon,' says he, like a man skilled in this spiritual arithmetic,—'I reckon,' after a due estimate of their comparative value, 'that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.'

No man was ever so well qualified to make this estimate. Of the sufferings of the present world he had shared more largely than any man. Of the glory that shall be revealed, he had a glimpse granted to no other man. He had been caught up into Paradise. He 'had heard the words of God, and seen the visions of the Almighty,' and the result of his privileged experience, was, that he 'desired to depart, and to be with Christ;' that he desired to escape from this valley of tears; that he was impatient to recover the celestial vision, eager to perpetuate the momentary foretaste of the glories of immortality.

We perceive, then, how this hope of future felicity sustained him under conflicts, of which we, in an established state of Christianity, and suffering only under the common trials of mortality can have no adequate conception. His courageous faith was kept alive and fortified by fervently practising the duty he so unwearyingly urges upon others; *continuing instant in prayer.*

To encourage this practice in his readers, and at the same time to point out the source of his own heavenly hope, and continual intercourse with the Divine presence, he adds, 'the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.' Nor does his high trust and confidence in God, thus gendered, easily find its limit. On the contrary, he adds, 'we know that *all* things work together for good to them that love God.'

This trust was an assurance of the largest import, and it involved indefinite consequences. Having cordially confided in him for salvation through the blood of Christ, he found, as is always the case, the greater involving the less: he found that he had little difficulty in trusting Him with his inferior concerns. To Him to whom he had committed his eternal happiness, to Him he could not scruple to confide his fortune, his health, his reputation, his life.

We have not, it is true, these manifestations, of which the apostle was favoured with a temporary enjoyment. But we have *his* testimony, added to the testimony, the evidences, the proofs, the promises, the demonstrations of the whole New Testament. Why, then, are we not supported, encouraged, animated by them? It is because we do not examine these evidences, because we do not consult these testimonies, because we neglect these proofs: therefore it is, that we are not nurtured by these promises. We entertain them as speculations, rather than as convictions, we receive them as notions, rather than as facts.

If ever a cordial desire of these devout assurances is conferred, it is in fervent prayer. What an encouragement to this holy exercise, is the hope of being raised by it, to the heart-felt belief that such felicity is real, and that it is reserved for the final portion of the humble Christian? Too humble, perhaps, to give full credit that such great things can be in store for him. For a moment he is staggered, till faith, the parent of that humility which trembles while it believes, enables him to apply to himself the promises of Him to whom nothing is impossible, the merits of Him for whom nothing is too great, the death of Him who died that we might live forever.

In whatever part of his writings the Apostle speaks of the efficacy of the death of Christ, and of the 'constraining' power of his love, there is a vehemence in his desire, a vivacity in his sentiments, an energy in his language, an intensity in his feelings, which strongly indicate a mind penetrated with the depth of his own views. He paints the love of his Lord as a grace, of which, though his soul was deeply sensible as to its nature, yet as to the degree, it is 'exceeding abundantly above' not only 'all that he could ask,' but 'all that he could think.' His boldest conceptions sink under the impression which no language could convey.

Yet these sublime portions of his writings, which bear the more special stamp and impress of the gospel, which afford the nearest view of realities as yet unapproachable, are set aside by many, as things in which they have no personal concern. They have, indeed, a sort of blind reverence for them, as for something which they conceive to be at once sacred and unintelligible, such a kind of respect as a man would naturally entertain at the sight of a copy of the Scriptures in a language which he did not understand.

Eloquent as he was, we often find him labouring under his intense conception of ideas too vast for utterance. In describing the extent of the love of God, its height and depth, its length and breadth, his soul seems to expand with the dimensions he is unfolding. His expressions seem to acquire all that force with which he in-

timates that the soul itself, so acted upon, is invested. *To be strengthened with might*, would have been reckoned tautology in an ordinary writer on an ordinary subject; and to be strengthened with *all* might, would seem an attribute impossible to mortality. But holy Paul had himself felt the excellency of that power; he knew that it is derived, and that the fountain of duration is *the glorious power of God*.

In delineating the mighty operations of Divine love on the human mind, the seeming hyperboles are soberly true. Where the theme is illimitable, language will burst its bounds. He preaches *riches which are unsearchable*—exhorts to know *the love which surpasses knowledge*—promises *peace which passes understanding*—we must *look at things which are not seen*—*against hope we must believe in hope*—while *sorrowful we must always be rejoicing*—*as having nothing we must reckon that we possess all things*—*dying, and behold we live*—*though unknown we are well known*—In short, he reconciles contradictions, unites opposites. Antipathies by nature become affinities by grace. The love of God in Christ is the point where he makes contraries centre, and impossibilities meet.

His spirit seems most intimately to identify itself with the church of Ephesus. What an improbable union! The late idolatrous worshippers of Diana, and the late persecutors of the saints of Jesus, have now but one heart and one soul! These recent enemies to Christ, and to each other, now meet in one common point of attraction. With what holy triumph does he dilate on their common faith! that love of God in Christ Jesus which is their common centre and bond of union!

Still, as we have such frequent occasion to observe, he does not sacrifice practical duty to the indulgence of his rapture. Still he does not allow even these Ephesians to rest satisfied with the grace they have received. It is not enough that they have been favoured with a vocation, they must 'walk worthy of it.' 'The perfecting of the saints' must be carried on; 'they must reach the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' No such perfection had been attained as would allow them to rest in their present position. Even in this highly favoured church, *progress* is enjoined, pressed, reiterated.—No elevation of devout feeling sets him above attention to moral goodness.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the abrupt apostrophes of praise and gratitude into which, in the midst of sorrow, of exhortation, of reproof, he unexpectedly breaks out. The love of his Redeemer so fills his soul, that it requires an effort to restrain its outward expression. Even when engaged in the transaction of business, and directing the concerns of others, which, by an ordinary mind, would have been pleaded as a valid reason for suspending spiritual ideas, and dismissing spiritual feelings, they yet mix themselves, as it were involuntarily, with his secular cares; there is not only a satisfaction but a joyfulness in these escapes of affection which seem to spring from his soul, in proportion to the depression of his circumstances, to the danger which surrounded, to the deaths which threatened him.

When Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, it is recorded that they prayed at midnight. This would naturally be expected from such men, under such circumstances; but it is added, 'they sang *praises* unto God.' Thus they not only justified, but glorified Him, under this suffering, as well as degradation. For it must not be forgotten, that this imprisonment was not merely a measure for securing their persons,—they were stripped bare—many stripes were laid upon them, and the iron entered into their soul. Yet they sang praises unto God.

What a triumph is here of the element of spirit over the force and violence of outward circumstances!

> 'Th' oppressor holds
> His body bound, but knows not what a range,
> His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain;
> And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
> Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells.'

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, to which we have just referred, we are presented with a fresh instance how much his devotion rose under the same circumstances of distress.—It was written from a prison, and is almost one entire effusion of love and praise. It is an overflowing expression of affectionate gratitude, that has no parallel. It seems to be enriched with an additional infusion of the Spirit of God, and has perhaps more of the heroism of Christian feeling than, except in the discourses of our Lord, is to be found in the whole sacred treasury. It seems to come fresh from the celestial world. He speaks not as from a prison, but as from a region of light, and life, and glory. His thoughts are in heaven, his soul is with his Saviour, his heart is with his treasure: no wonder, then, that his language has a tincture of the idiom of immortality.

As Archimedes, when Syracuse was taken by the besiegers, was so intent on a mathematical demonstration, that he knew not when the city was lost: so the apostle, absorbed in a concern as much superior to that of the philosopher as Scripture truth is to scientific, lost sight of the cruelties of Nero, forgot his former sufferings, felt not his present captivity, thought not of his impending fate—present, past, and future, as they related to himself, were absorbed in his zeal for the salvation of the church, for the glory of its founder! Mark the divine supports vouchsafed to this imprisoned Saint! Note his state of grace! Observe the perfection of his faith! How the motion of his spirit was accelerated as it drew nearer to its centre! He whose deep humility had suggested to him the possibility, that, after converting others, he might himself be rejected: he who had desired not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon—now declares that he is *ready* to be offered up, now *desires* to depart; not in the gentle decay of exhausted nature, not in the weaning languor of a sick bed, not in the calm of a peaceful dissolution, suffering only the pains inseparable from an ordinary death; but he is prepared to meet the hand of violence: he is ready to pour out his blood upon the scaffold; he is longing to join 'the souls which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.' So far from being dismayed, because he knew that his mar-

tyrdom was at hand; he who knew not what it was to boast, yet knowing in whom he had trusted; feeling his eternal redemption drawing nigh, could exclaim with a holy bravery; 'I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.'

Then in a rapture of triumphant joy at the mental view of the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, 'had prepared for him against the great day,' that same unparalleled philanthropy, which he had so constantly manifested, breaks out and consecrates a moment, when we might have supposed the immediate nearness of his own unspeakable blessedness would have engrossed his whole soul. His religion was no selfish piety, his hope no solitary salvation. Gratitude swells into its highest transport from the reflection that the Lord Jesus had not exclusively reserved the crown for him, no, nor for the beloved Timothy, to whom he writes, nor for the multitudes of his own friends, nor for the converts who were to be peculiarly 'his joy and crown of rejoicing;' but 'for ALL them also which love his appearing,' for all 'the redeemed of the Lord' to the end of the world.

CHAP. XIII.

A general view of the qualities of Saint Paul: his knowledge of human nature—his delicacy in giving advice or reproof—his integrity.

THERE is in Saint Paul's writings and conduct, such warmth and openness; so much frankness and candour; such an unreserved pouring out of his very soul; such a free disclosure of his feelings, as well as of his opinions; such an elevation, mingled with such a soberness of thinking; so much social kindness, with so much Divine love; so much practical activity, with such deep spirituality; so much human prudence, with so much of the wisdom which is from above; so much tenderness for the persons of men, with so little connivance at their faults; so much professional dignity, with so much personal humility,—as it would be difficult to find in any other human being.

Yet in all these opposite excellences, there is nothing that is not practicable, nothing that is not imitable. His religion, like his morality, has a peculiar sedateness. His ardent feelings betray him into no intemperance of speech, into no inequality of action. His piety is free from eccentricity, his faith from presumption.

Uniformly we find a great reasonableness in his character; and it adds to his value as an example, that he was, if we may be allowed so familiar an expression, eminently a man of business. His transactions, indeed always tended to the same end with his devotions and his instructions; he was full of care, but it was the care of all the churches; each day was fully occupied, but it was that same 'care' which came upon him, not only as a Sunday, but as a daily care.'

The perfection in which he possessed this quality, proves that his devotedness had in it nothing of abstraction. He exhibited no contempt of the common usages, no renunciation of the common comforts of life, when the former could with propriety be observed, or the latter be lawfully enjoyed; no coveting of sufferings, when they could be conscientiously avoided. He was no pattern for ascetics, no prototype for Stylites. He bequeathed no example of bodily macerations, nor uncommanded austerities, nor penances unprofitably aiming at atonement. His idea of self-denial was to sacrifice his own will; his notion of pleasing God was to do and suffer the Divine will.

His discretion was scarcely less conspicuous than his zeal: unlike some enthusiastic Christians in the early ages of the Church, who, not contented to meet persecution, invited it; he never sought, whilst he never shrunk from danger. Though his life was one continued martyrdom, to which the brief suffering of the stake or the axe would have been a mercy, yet he was contented to live for lengthened services; though he would have finished his course with joy to himself, he was willing to protract it for the glory of God; though *he counted not his life dear*, yet he knew it to be useful, and therefore desired its continuance.

He was entirely exempt from that indiscreet zeal which seems to glory in provoking the displeasure of the world. He had nothing of that bad judgment, which seeks distinction from singularity. His straight-forward rectitude neither courted the applause, nor despised the good opinion of men. He who, in the integrity of his heart could say, 'We sought glory neither of you nor yet of others; in the tenderness of that heart could say, to the same persons, 'for what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing; are not even ye,—ye are our glory and joy."

He was totally free from any irrational confidence in supernatural interpositions. Though living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he felt no enthusiastic inflation.

Though, in his perilous* voyage, assured by an angel of God that there should be no loss of lives, yet he helped *with his own hands* to throw out the tackling, and the ship *must* be worked by his direction. He went farther, declaring, 'except the men abide in the ship ye *cannot* be saved.' Could the boldest impugner of Divine Providence have exercised more prudence, have exhibited more activity?

Not only from this passage, but from the general spirit of his writings, we may learn, that merely to say, we trust in God for the accomplishment of any thing within our power, without using ourselves the rational means of accomplishing it, is a total want of sense; and not entirely to trust in Him, while we are using them, is an utter want of faith.

Though favoured with immediate revelations from above, yet was Paul so singularly modest, as only slightly to advert to Divine communications, and then in the name of a third person,—*I knew a man in Christ.*—So continent of speech, as not even to disclose this distinction till near fourteen years after it had been conferred. May we not then agree with the sagacious Paley, that 'Saint Paul's mind had none of the characteristics of enthusiasm; that the coolness of his

* Acts, ch. xxvii.

head always kept pace with the warmth of his heart?'

His conduct uniformly exhibits the precise distinction between Christian wisdom and worldly policy. His boundary-line is clearly defined, and he never steps over it to serve a purpose. Of that prudence which is a-kin to selfishness, of that discretion which leans to craft, of that candour which tends to undue pliancy, of that wisdom which is sensual and earthly, he had not the slightest tincture. What an illustrious orator of our own time said of his contemporary statesman, may be far more appropriately applied to Saint Paul,—that, in gaining admiration, *his virtues were his arts.**

His intellectual powers were admirably constituted to second his high moral and spiritual attainments. He had an intuitive sagacity of mind. This deep master of the science of man was intimately acquainted with all the doublings and turnings, the intricacies and perverseness of the heart. In short he knew the exact point from which to take the most comprehensive view of this *scene of man;* and his writings possess this great advantage, that they also put the intelligent reader in the position to take the same view. He knew every plait and fold of the human character. He had studied the species in all its modifications and varieties, from the monarch on the throne to the meanest officer in his court; from the high priest presiding in the Sanhedrim to the pharisee praying in the street: of the intolerance of the one, he had had personal experience; through the duplicity of the other, his keen eye could pierce, without consulting the breadth of his phylactery.

The same acute penetration brought him no less acquainted with the errors of the well-intentioned, with the weaknesses of the wise, with the failings of the virtuous, and the inconsistencies of even the conscientious. Yet did he never convert his knowledge of all the shades of the human mind to an unkind, malevolent, or selfish purpose. It never taught him to hate the unworthy, with whose obliquities it made him acquainted; or to despise the weak whose infirmities it had discovered. So far was he from availing himself of his sagacity, by turning the vices or imbecilities of others to his own account, that it inspired him with a more tender and compassionate feeling for the frailties of their common nature.

In perusing his Epistles, we should always bear in mind, that Saint Paul is not addressing the profligate and profane, but converts, or, at least, religious professors. This consideration would prevent our putting the reproofs and corrections which he thought necessary for them at too great a distance from ourselves. Into this danger we may be too much inclined to fall, if we do not bring these people nearer to what we suppose to be our own level. They were already Christians. It was not, therefore, always necessary to arrange all the fundamental doctrines into a regular system, much less to begin with a formal exposition of the elements of a religion, with the principles of which they were already imbued; or at least with the doctrines of which they were acquainted. The manner of addressing them is a proof that their progress was already considerable.

The first Epistle is inscribed 'to all that are at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, whose faith is spoken of throughout the world.' The next is 'to the church of God at Corinth, with all the saints in Achaia.' Another 'to the saints that are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.' Again, 'to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse.' His letters to individual friends, designate also the piety of his correspondents. 'To Timothy, his son in the faith;' 'to Titus, his own son after the common faith.' And in writing to the Hebrews collectively, he denominates them 'holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.'

It would be well if the generality of Christians could aspire to rank with any of these classes. Saint Paul's knowledge of mankind, however, of which we have said so much, would prevent his addressing the best of his converts, as characters who did not require either caution, correction, or improvement. He knew even after they had adopted the Christian profession, how pertinaciously bad habits would cleave to some, how much besetting sins, natural infirmity, temptation without, and passion within, would impede the progress of others. He was aware that many who thought themselves sincere, and perhaps really were so, were yet careless and cold hearted; that many who were warm in profession, were selfish, indolent, covetuous; that many who appeared to be lovers of God, were yet inordinately lovers of pleasure; that some who professed to be dead to sin, were alive to the world. 'Alexander did him much evil;' 'Demas forsook him;' 'Phygellus and Hermogenes turned away from him.'

The persons to whom he wrote might, on the whole, be considered as no unfair specimen of professing Christians in every age. Consequently neither his doctrine nor his precepts can, by any fair rule of judgment, be limited to the community, or even to the individual, to whom they were immediately inscribed; he has erected his mandate into an unalterable standard of general Christianity.

The inspiring guide of Saint Paul knew that human nature, left to its own specific operation, would be the same in that church of Rome to which his Epistle was addressed, as in the now existing church of that metropolis,—a church which has so far departed from the simplicity of its founder; that the church of Ephesus would differ only in its local circumstances and form of government from the church of England; that the same sort of beings, with the same wants and weaknesses which composed the church of Galatia, would compose that of Geneva and of Holland; that it was not the Corinthian convert alone who should become 'a new creature;' that it was not the member of any *particular* community that must 'put off the old man with his deeds;' he knew that the transmuting power of true religion would confer the same character of newness upon every genuine believer; that as in every age the principle is the same, so also will be the results.

In illustration of these general remarks, let

* Mr Burke of the Marquis of Rockingham.

us select a particular case.—Our apostle had not studied the human heart to so little purpose as not to perceive that it is of itself commonly indisposed to liberality. Even where a measure of religious feeling has conferred or enlarged this virtue, he knew that it requires excitement to keep the flame alive; that if easily kindled by some affecting tale, or some present object, it may, by being left to itself, be as easily extinguished. He knew that impressions, if not immediately followed up, and acted upon, soon wear out; that a warm impulse, if left to cool, evaporates in mere profession. On this principle, then, we find him delicately reminding the Corinthians* of the zeal with which they had voluntarily engaged to raise a fund for the indigent, and remonstrating on the obligation to put their own plan in execution, by distributing as well as collecting.

In suggesting this duty, he takes a circuitous path, by intimating the necessity of consistency in the conduct of Christians, by dwelling on the expediency of those who abounded in faith and eloquence, and religious knowledge, abounding also in acts of beneficence; and by hinting that a high profession, without that broad principle of Christian charity, of which he knew almsgiving to be one fruit, would be an anomaly discreditable to themselves, and injurious to religion.

He then proposes to them, with the hand of a master, persuasions, arguments, and examples; he makes duties grow out of motives, and impresses both by actual instances. He mentions, in a sort of incidental way, the benevolence of a less opulent and less instructed people, the Macedonians; and, according to his invariable custom, produces their charity as growing out of their piety. *They gave themselves first unto the Lord*, and then, as the effect would naturally follow the cause, *they gave unto us by the will of God.* He informs them, that this generous people did not wait to confer their bounty till it was solicited. He intimates, that in this instance it was not those who wanted the charity, but those who gave it, 'that pressed it, with much entreaty;' instructively hinting, that they had made true use of afflictions; for that 'their poverty,' instead of being pleaded as an apology for withholding their charity, 'abounded to the riches of their liberality.'

This was a powerful intimation, that if those more indigent converts had been so bountiful, what might not be expected from the opulent metropolis of the regions of Achaia? It was also an experiment of their sincerity; for if they were more forward in profession, and more abundant in graces, would it not be an expected consequence, that they should be more abundant in works of charity?

And, finally not contented with pressing upon them the example of a church of inferior note, he rises suddenly to the sublimest of all precedents. He does not, to *them*, quote any injunction of their Divine Master to charity, though with such injunctions the Gospel abounds; but in a manner strong, and instant, unexpectedly presses his *example*, and in the loftiest possible instance:* 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. To what a trifle, to what a nothing does he, by this admirable turn, reduce the largest pecuniary bounty, by directing their attention to the UNSPEAKABLE GIFT!

To the same purpose he directs his friends at Ephesus, in his last affectionate discourse, to the *precept* of Christ. After the most powerful exhortations, he alludes to his having himself supplied his necessities by the labour of his own hands, in order to the exercise of charity; and then, lest they should suppose this to be any vaunt of his self-denial, rather than a declaration made to stimulate his hearers to similar industry, by a similar motive of charity,—he sums up the charge by a most powerful incitement, equal of itself to account for his own generosity, as well as to awaken theirs, producing the only posthumous quotation which Scripture has preserved of the Divine Instructor: 'Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Another instance of his delicacy is that in addressing the same people, when he would lower to its just inferiority the value of gifts and miraculous powers, in comparison of *the more excellent way*, he does not directly point at their vanity and self-exultation, but with a refinement worthy the attention of all censors, he transfers the application to himself—Though *I* (not though you) speak with the tongues of men and of angels; though I have the gift of prophecy and faith; though *I* bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, *I* am nothing.†

As he thought it necessary, in this address to adduce the strongest supposeable instances, even instances which could not be thought to exist, there was no method which could so effectually expose the radical evil of uncharitableness with so little offence to those who were guilty of it, as to apply the imaginary case to his own person: nor could the most elaborate harangue on the beauty of charity have produced without it so powerful an effect; nor would any delineation of all the opposite vices, which were notoriously practised by the proud and sensual Corinthians, have affected them so much, as this beautiful portrait of the heavenly virtue in which many of them were eminently deficient, and to whom the picture therefore presented such a contrast.

Yet, while he thus combated their preference of those which might raise admiration, to those which tended to the public good, he thought proper to let them see that the inferior value he set on them was not to screen or justify any ignorance of his own; and that, as is too commonly the case, he did not depreciate learning, because he did not possess it.

After having enjoined on the Thessalonians, that it was their duty 'to love one another, as they were taught of God,' lest it might look like a suspicion rather than a reminding, he encouragingly subjoins,—'and indeed ye do it.' In the same spirit, after saying to the same

* 2 Cor. ch. viii

* 2 Cor. ch. viii. † Cor. ch. xiii.

church, 'Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another,' he again intimates that they did not so much require to be instructed as congratulated, by adding, 'even as also ye do.'

Again, with a holy generosity, when he has any thing to notice, which he can honestly praise, the commendation he bestows is undivided; when any unacceptable point to press, he softens prejudices and courts compliance by mixing himself with the injunction, or involving himself in the censure: 'Let *us* cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh or spirit.' In lamenting, in the seventh of Romans, the dominion of sin, he speaks in his own person: in referring, in the subsequent chapter, to the dominion of grace, he extends the consolation to all believers. On every occasion which calls both qualities, gentleness and lowliness, into exercise, Saint Paul shows himself not only to be the humblest, but the politest of men.

Had a late noble and polished preceptor* been as conversant with the Holy Scriptures as he unquestionably was with polite literature, and had his principles been as sound as his taste, he would have had no occasion to look farther than the writings of Paul of Tarsus, for the most complete illustration of that favourite maxim, the adoption of which he so repeatedly enjoined on his misguided pupil. His fine sense, under the influence of religion, would have led him, while he pressed the injunction, to give it all it wanted,—a right direction. He would have found the *suaviter in modo* accompany the *fortiter in re*, more uniformly in our apostle than in any other writer.

In addition to the numberless instances of this union, that occur in his Epistles, some of which we have already noticed, we cannot forbear mentioning, that in writing to Timothy, he recommends 'the spirit of power and of a *sound mind*;' to which he subjoins, '*hold fast the form of sound words*.' But while he is so peremptory as to the force of the matter, he is not less attentive to the duty of mildness in the manner. He directs, that the dictates of this sound mind be conveyed with *affection*,—this form of sound words be communicated with *love*; and in expatiating on these gentle graces, we must not forget the situation under which he exercised them.

In the days of prosperous fortune, we frequently see the appearance of cheerfulness and complacency in characters not remarkable for gentleness of mind: but Paul, under the most disastrous circumstances, never fails to exhibit the same amiable courtesies. It is therefore not easy to account for the prejudices of certain persons, who always speak of him, as a character of the most repulsive harshness.

I should be very unwilling to suspect, if a few of these critics are to be found among my own sex, that their dislike to this apostle arises from a cause which is rather calculated to inspire gratitude than to provoke censure. His attention, in not being limited to their highest interests, but descending also to their minutest concerns is a proof surely that he thought nothing beneath his notice, which might raise the dignity and add to the beauty of the female character. I should be very unwilling to suppose that their disapprobation arises from his having said, 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Nor could I presume to suspect, that his injunction of submission to their husbands, —of subordination *always*, and of silence *sometimes*,—can possibly be the cause of the hostility of any Christian ladies.

Still less would I venture to suppose, that their displeasure is owing to his having recommended 'that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel,'—nor that they should object to him for his preference of 'shamefacedness' to 'costly array,'—of 'sobriety' to 'broidered hair,'—of 'good works' to 'gold and pearls.'*

It looks as if Saint Paul was of opinion, that the external appearance of women was an indication of the disposition of the mind; and this opinion it is probable made him so earnest in recommending these symbols of internal purity. He doubtless more strongly prohibits certain personal decorations, because they were the insignia of the notoriously unworthy females of his time. And it may be fairly presumed, that he never thought it could be construed into a hardship to be cautioned against wearing the badge of the profession of Lais.

If they are of opinion, that his pointedly suggesting to them the ornaments of *a meek and quiet spirit*, was at least a *superfluous* injunction, they will forgive him on the ground that he might not think it unnecessary, even to the most gentle, to 'stir up their pure mind by way of *remembrance*.'

It is obvious that he could not possibly entertain any prejudices against a sex, in which he counted so many valuable friends. And let it be seriously observed, that in whatever relates to pious affections, to Christian practice, to disinterested kindness, to zeal and diligence, there was obviously, in Saint Paul's estimation, neither male nor female. For we do not hear more of his affectionate regard for good women, and of his generous testimony to their worth, than we hear of the friendship with the sex of any other character in history? He delights in their praises. 'Phebe' is warmly commended for her good offices 'to the Saints at Rome,' not only as having been an important assistant to the apostle himself, but as 'the succourer of many' Christians. 'Priscilla' is honourably recorded as 'his helper in Christ Jesus,' as one who with her husband, had, 'for his life laid down their necks.' For this he thankfully observes, they are entitled not only to his thanks, but also to 'the thanks of all the churches of the Gentiles.' He acknowledges that 'Mary had bestowed much labour on him and his converts.' The name of 'Apphia,' and that of 'Julia,' is perpetuated by his affectionate gratitude. That of 'Chloe' stands prominent in his grateful page. 'Tryphena and Tryphosa laboured much in the Lord.' To the honour of British ladies be it remembered, that his friend 'Claudia' was our countrywoman.†

* Lord Chesterfield

* 1 Tim. ch. ii.

† If any consideration should increase the interest we

Paul observes that, in the family of Timothy, piety on the female side was hereditary, and he congratulates his friend on the excellent principles of his two maternal relations; and virtually ascribes to these instructresses, 'that from a child he was acquainted with the Scriptures.' Others he has named, whose praise is not only in the churches, but whose names are in the book of life.

Are not these testimonies to female excellence from such an eulogist, and in such a cause,

'Above all Greek, above all Roman fame?'

If it stands recorded on the monument of a noble Englishman, as his highest distinction, that he was *friend to Sir Philip Sidney*, it stands engraven on a monument more durable than brass, even in the indestructible records of the Book of God, that so many women were the honoured friends of the chiefest apostle of Jesus Christ.

If Saint Paul has been further accused by some persons of being an enemy to the state of marriage, it must be by those who forget to take into the account what a calamitous time, that in which he wrote was for Christians, - who forget also his own express declaration, that the suggested suspension of such an union was 'good for the *present distress*.' His compassionate mind foresaw the aggravated calamities to which the entrance into this tender connection would, at this particular juncture, involve the persecuted Christians. Is it not absurd to suppose that this zealous apostle of Christ would suggest, as a permanent practice, a measure which must in a few years, if persisted in, inevitably occasion the entire extinction of Christianity itself?

Since, then, it would be derogatory to any, especially of my own sex, to suspect that their objection to Saint Paul can arise from any of these causes, may we not more rationally conjecture, that it proceeds from a prejudice lightly taken up on hearsay evidence—a prejudice propagated without serious inquiry, without having themselves closely examined his writings? Such an examination, to which they are now earnestly invited, would convince them that, to all his exalted qualities, he added, in an eminent degree, urbanity, feeling, and liberality.

But nothing more raises our veneration for Saint Paul's character, than that his extreme sensibility of heart, and his rare delicacy in consulting the feelings of others, to which we have so frequently referred, is never exercised at the expense of his integrity. There are, as we have before observed, many upright minds, whose honesty is yet somewhat disfigured by a harsh temper. They are too conscientious to censure unjustly, but, knowing the censure to be merited, they have rather a pleasure in inflicting the correction. And though they are not glad the offender deserves it, they are not sorry it is *their* duty to impart it. Saint Paul never severely reproved another, that he did not inflict a wound on his own feelings. Yet though he would rather have spared another than himself, he would spare neither when the imperative voice of duty demanded plain dealing. Gentleness of manner in our apostle was the fruit of his piety; the good breeding of some men is a substitute for theirs.

The conduct of Saint Peter and Saint Paul presents at once a striking instance of the integrity of Christian friendship, and of the imperfection of human excellence. Before the apostles met at Antioch, Peter seems to have erred in a material point, not in associating freely with the Gentiles, but in disingenuously shunning their society on the return of his Jewish friends. This fear of human censure, which was not yet entirely extinguished in this great apostle, while it strengthened the prejudices of the Jews, weakened the influence of the other apostles; misled Barnabas 'though a good man, and a just; and not a little alarmed Paul.

This vigilant minister thought the example so fraught with dangerous consequences, that he boldly remonstrated on this act of duplicity,—an act unlike the general character of Peter, which, except in *one* awful instance, rather inclined to indiscreet frankness. Paul himself informs us, in his Epistle to the Galatians, that he 'withstood him to his face,' not to gratify any resentment of his own, but because his friend 'was to be blamed;' not privately, to spare his confusion, but 'before them all,' to avert the danger. Nor does this Christian sincerity appear to have interrupted their friendship; for it did not prevent Peter, on a subsequent occasion, from alluding to Paul as his *beloved brother*. From this circumstance we may learn among other things, that the 'fear of man,' is one of the lingering evils which quits the human heart with the greatest reluctance: it shows that it may cleave to him, even in his renovated state, and that therefore the same vigilance is necessary in this, as in his previous character.

Peter, on this occasion, gave an instance of that prompt repentance which he had so repeatedly manifested after the commission of an error. He offered no justification of his fault, but observed a meek silence. We learn also, from the recorded failings of Saint Peter, that this *first* bishop of Rome, at least, did not arrogate to himself the claim of infallibility.

Saint Paul's kindness for his brethren never made him on any occasion lose sight of his courageous integrity. Considering the Gentile proselytes to be peculiarly the objects of his care, he resolutely defended them from the necessity of submitting to the law of Moses, thus preserving to the Gentiles their liberty, and to the Gospel its purity. By his firmness in this instance, a great obstacle to the reception of Christianity was removed.

May we here be allowed to observe, though somewhat out of place, that the characters of these two apostles are brought forward with such remarkable prominency and detail, in Sacred History, that it would be a subject well worthy some able pen, to delineate the characters of the men, and interweave that of their writings, in some connected work. Thus placed in one frame, we should have a most interesting view of these two eminent persons as the repre-

take in this blessed apostle, it would be the strong presumption, from testimonies recently adduced by a learned, pious, and labourious prelate, that Saint Paul, in all probability, preached the Gospel in Britain, to which country it is conjectured, after the most diligent research, that he returned with the family of Caractacus.

sentatives of the Gentile and the Jewish Churches of Christ. This representation, incorporated with the circumstances which distinguished the first promulgation of the Gospel, renders every particular concerning them highly affecting.

But to return. It is to be observed, as a fresh proof of the honesty and the spirit of self renunciation which governed our apostle, that when he reprehends the Corinthians for their imprudence in opposing one minister to another;—in the partiality and favouritism which he condemns, he makes no exception for Paul: the preference to himself above Apollos would not gratify a mind, who, beside the danger to the flattered individual, saw the evil of opposition, of rivalry, of division, let who will be the person preferred.

He might have seen the dangerous and blinding influence of excessive prepossession and party attachment; when even his wise and virtuous contemporary, Seneca, could say of Cato, that he would rather esteem drunkenness a virtue than think Cato vicious. Nor would he probably have accepted of the same compliment which Cicero pays to the famous discourse on the Immortality of the Soul,—that though Plato had given no *reason* for it, yet his *authority* would have determined him.

CHAP. XIV.

Saint Paul on the Love of Money.

Among the innumerable difficulties daily incident to the life of man, we may reckon as not among the least, the danger almost inseparable, which attends the yet inevitable necessity for money. To reconcile integrity in the pursuit with innocence in the possession, is indeed to convert a perilous trial into a valuable blessing. Riches are no evil in themselves: the danger lies, in not being able to manage the temptation they hold out to us. Even where the object is fairly pursued, and the acquisition not unfairly appropriated, a close application to the attainment of wealth is not without its snares to the most upright and liberal mind.

Even these better-disposed persons, in spite of purity of intention and integrity of conduct, are in constant danger, while in pursuit of their object, of being entangled in complicated schemes, and overwhelmed with excessive solicitude; of being so overcharged with the cares of this world, as to put that world which is out of sight, out of mind also.

Others find, or fancy, that there is a shorter cut and a surer road to riches, than that in which plodding industry holds on his slow and weary way. Industry is too dull for an enterprising spirit; integrity too scrupulous for the mind which is bent on a quick accomplishment of its object. The rewards of both are too remote, too uncertain, and too penurious, for him 'who maketh haste to be rich.'

Much occurs to this point, in Saint Paul's charge to Timothy, contained in the latter part of the last chapter of his first Epistle. Keeping one main end in view, the apostle has indeed adopted a sort of concealed method, which requires some attention in the reader to discover. The general drift of this powerful exhortation is, less to guard his beloved friend himself, who was perhaps in comparatively small danger from the temptation, than to induce him to warn those over whom he had the spiritual superintendence, against the *love of money*. In order to this, he does not immediately enter upon the main subject, but opens with another proposition, though in no very remote connection with it; a proposition the most important, and the most incontrovertible, namely, the immense gain to that soul which should combine *godliness* with *contentment*. He knew the union to be inseparable; that as godliness cannot subsist without contentment, so neither can true contentment spring from any other than an inward principle of real piety. All contentment, which has not its foundation in religion, is merely constitutional—animal hilarity, the flow of blood and spirits in the more sanguine character; coldness and apathy in the more indifferent.

The pressing, then, this preliminary principle, was beginning at the right end. A spirit of contentment is stifling covetousness in its birth; it is strangling the serpent in the cradle. Strong and striking are the reasons which the apostle produces against discontent. To the indigent he says, 'they brought nothing into the world,' therefore they need the less murmur at possessing little in it. To the wealthy he holds out a still more powerful argument against *the rage canine of dying rich*, when he reminds them that they 'can carry nothing out of it.'

This reflection he intends at once to teach content to the poor, and moderation to the rich. The one should be satisfied with a bare subsistance, for the poorest cannot be poorer than when they came into the world: the other should not enlarge their desires for boundless indulgences, to the means of gratifying which, as well as to the gratification itself, the grave will so soon put a period.

The apostle, having shown his deep insight into the human mind by his brief but just view of the subject, goes on to show the miserable consequences of discontent, or, which is the same thing, of an indefinite desire of wealth. 'They that *will* be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.' The words are weighty and powerful, and amply verified by experience, whether we consider money in its acquisition or in its possession. Its votaries 'fall into a snare.'

We have need to be more intently on the watch against the intrusions of this unsuspected sin, because there is not one which intrenches itself within so many creditable pretences; none in which more perverted passages are adduced from Scripture itself in its support. 'If any provide not for those of his own house, he is worse than an infidel,' is frequently translated into a language foreign to its meaning, unfavourable to dispersing abroad. That charity begins at home, is not seldom pleaded as a reason why she should never turn out. There is one plea always ready as an apology for the eagerness for amassing superfluous wealth; and it is a plea which has a good look. *We must*

provide for our children is the pretence, but we must indulge our avarice, is the truth. The fact is, a man is *provident* for his family, but he is covetous for himself. The sordid mind and the grasping hand are too eager to put off their gratification to so remote a period as the future aggrandizement of those for whom they pretend to amass. The covetous man hungers for instant gratification, for the pleasure of counting his hoards, for the pride of 'calling his lands by his own name.'

Even many professing Christians speak with horror of public diversions, or even of human literature, as containing the essence of all sin, yet seem to see no turpitude, to feel no danger, to dread no responsibility, in any thing that respects this private, domestic, bosom sin; this circumspect vice, this discreet and orderly corruption. Yet the sins which make no noise are often the most dangerous, and the vices of which the effect is to procure respect, instead of contempt, constitute the most deadly snare.

Wit has not been more alert in shooting its pointed shafts at avarice, than argument has been busy in its defence. No advocate, it is true, will venture to defend it under its own proper character; but avarice takes the license used by other felons, and, by the adoption of an *alias*, escapes the reprobation attached to its own name. Covetousness has a bad sound; it is, if we may be allowed the application, a moral cacophony, a fault which no critic in ethics can at any rate tolerate. It is a tacit confession of its hateful nature, and its possessor never avows its real name, even to himself. This quality not only disguises its turpitude by concealment, but shrouds its own character under the assumed name of half the virtues. When accused, it can always make out a good case. It calls itself frugality, moderation, temperance, contempt of show, self-denial, sobriety; thus at once cherishing the pleasure and the profit of the sin, and the escaping its infamy.

Even the most careless in conduct, the most negligent of character, he who never defends himself against the charge of what he calls the more generous vices, indignantly fights off the imputation of this. While he deems it a venial offence to deny himself no guilty pleasures, to pay no just debts, he would repel the accusation of being sordid as strongly as a man of principle. Yet at the same time his thirst of money may be as ardent, in order to make a bad use of it, as his who covets it without intending to use it at all.

Let not therefore 'the snares' of this world and the deceitfulness of riches' make us forget that he who covets money as a means to other forbidden gratifications, is as much guilty of covetousness as he who desires it as an end. He who makes it the minister to improper indulgences, is not less criminal as an example, and is far more criminal as to the effects of his conduct, than he who covets in order that he may amass. The Word of Inspiration calls covetousness idolatry; but are not inordinate lovers of pleasure, for which money supplies the aliment, idolators also; inasmuch as the sacrifices they offer to their idol prevents their being 'lovers of God?'

If this ensnaring love of money assumes to be connected with the sober qualities, which is commonly the case in quiet minds, it is far otherwise in those of a different order. In most minds it is the enemy of charity. The demands of this great duty are amongst the first and most easy sacrifices at the shrine of Mammon, more especially where a too large scale of expense has been established, and a reduced expenditure is thought necessary: how often do we see the first deduction made, by withholding a little paltry sum which had been assigned to charity; a sum perhaps originally disproportionate to the general habits of expense; while no blow is aimed at the redundances of a devouring luxury, of an inordinate vanity; though the retrenchment in the first instance will scarcely be felt, while, in the latter, it might restore the power, not only of perpetuating, but of augmenting beneficence.

But the mischief is of still wider extent. In more animated minds the love of money is frequently allied to the bolder vices; to rapacity to oppression, to injustice: and as these more formidable sins are usually practised for the purpose of obtaining the means of splendour, magnificence, and show: wealth, even thus obtained, not seldom procures its own protection. The gay and unthinking, whose grand object in life is to multiply the scenes of dissipation, and who enjoy these pleasant effects of their neighbour's vices by participating in the amusements they procure, are not very inquisitive as to the source from whence these prodigal pleasures flow. The unsuccessful aspirer after forbidden wealth is indeed not only avoided but stigmatized; with them his crime lies not so much in the attempt as in the failure; while prosperous corruption easily works itself into favour: having first struggled for oblivion for the cause, it soon obtains praise for the effect, and finds little difficulty in maintaining a station which it required some management to reach.

But if there are few vices which separate a man less from the friendship of the world, than avarice, there are few that separate him more widely from the duty which he owes to his neighbour, or stand more fearfully between his soul and his God; 'it drowns men in destruction and perdition.' When the eye is first opened on the eternal world, how will many among the rich, the powerful, the flattered, be astonished to find all the attributes which made them great, extinct; all the appendages which made them arrogant, vanish; to find—nothing but themselves.

It is to be observed, that Saint Paul not only calls the love of money an evil, for in this view, where the passion is acknowledged, it is commonly considered; but he proceeds further to denominate it the 'root,' the radical principle, not only of one evil, but of *all* evil. Besides that there is scarcely any sin which the determined lovers of money will not be led to commit, in order to gain money, there are also, as we have observed, innumerable evils in its misapplication when gained; these he probably included in their general condemnation. Other vices are loved for their own sake, but riches are idolized for the sake of every indulgence of

which they procure the enjoyment, of every vice to which that enjoyment leads.

This it is which makes riches the general centre of human desire. They who do not accumulate money persuade themselves that they do not love it; but many love it for far other ends than to hoard it. Saint Paul knew that it was the *universal* snare; a trap appropriately baited with every allurement congenial to the taste of the person on whom the temptation is to be practised;—to the elegant desires of the more refined, or the coarser appetite of the more grossly voluptuous. The sensual, the aspiring, the vain, and the prodigal, all consider it as the grand indispensable material with which to build their visionary fabrics of happiness.

Money is the most efficient tool with which ambition works; it is the engine of political mischief, and of domestic oppression; the instrument of individual tyranny, and of universal corruption. Money is the elementary principle of pleasure; it is the magnet which, to the lover of flattery, attracts parasites; which the vain man loves for the circle it describes about him, and the train which it draws after him, even more than for the actual enjoyments which it procures him. It is the grand spring and fountain of pride and self-sufficiency; more especially to those who have nothing better to value themselves upon; to those of inferior education, suddenly raised to wealth or power; to those who are deficient in intellectual as well as spiritual endowments. In short, as the fabled king turned every thing into gold which he touched, so its craving possessor turns gold into every thing he desires. It is the substance and the essence which, under endless modifications, ensnares, betrays, and finally disappoints the heart of man.

After enumerating the various moral dangers to which the love of money lays the heart open, the Apostle adverts to its highest possible corruption; he declares it to be the root of apostacy. He doubtless alluded to his own immediate knowledge of certain persons, who, while they 'coveted after riches, had erred from the faith.' There is something extremely touching in this effect of covetousness, which Saint Paul appears himself to have witnessed among some of whom he had once seemed to hope better things;—*they had pierced themselves through with many sorrows*, with incurable anguish perhaps for that abandonment of God, into which covetousness had seduced them.

It was probably these living instances of the ruin of virtuous principles by this vice, which leads him to warn even Timothy, so great a proficient in piety, of the perils attached to the love of money. And nothing affords matter of more awful reflection to the most sincere Christian, than that Paul thought it necessary to caution his 'dearly beloved Timothy, his own son in the faith,' Timothy, the exemplary Bishop of Ephesus, against the snares of this insidious enemy. Shall a common, shall even a sincere Christian, think vigilance superfluous, when this distinguished saint was not only charged to caution others, but to guard himself against this most treacherous of all temptations?

There is something peculiarly solemn in the apostle's mode of adjuring Timothy to avoid this sin. The single apostrophe, 'O man of God!' would be a panoply against the temptation. The implied impossibility that *a man of God* could be a coveter of money, was equal to a thousand arguments against it.

The two-fold guard with which he arms Timothy is equally applicable to all Christians. He does not say, deliberate on your danger, reason on the temptation, produce your strong arguments against it,—but *flee these things*. Flight is in this case the only courage; escape the only security; turning your back upon the enemy, the only sure means of conquering him.

But Saint Paul does not only direct what is to be avoided, but what is to be done. The flight from sin is not a mere negative act, it involves positive duties; in its view it involves, *following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*. All these spiritual and moral graces he draws up in battle array, to assist as auxiliaries in the combat he is about to enjoin. The Christian will have to maintain a conflict with corruption and temptation, during the whole scene of action. Going on to sustain the metaphor drawn from the military warfare, he calls on Timothy *as a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ*; and while he exhorts him to *fight the good fight of faith*, he presents to his view the crown of victory. He assures him that it will not be a mere gratuitous fight, *he will lay hold on eternal life*.

He reminds Timothy of his special vocation 'whereunto thou art called.' He animates him with the quickening recollection of the glorious profession he had made; and that, not in the retirement of devotion, but 'before many witnesses,' intimating how much the honour of the Gospel is concerned in the proficiency, the steadfastness, the perseverance to the end, of all its professors, especially of its appointed teachers. He not only reminds him of his profession at his baptism, and consecration to the ministry, but in order to elevate his mind to the highest pitch, he adjures him *in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things*, and could raise him to immortal glory; and, as if he would fill his mind with every grand and awful image, reminds him of the 'good confession made by the Divine Confessor before Pontius Pilate,' exhorting him from all these lofty motives, to 'keep this commandment spotless and unreproachable until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ!' In so doing, men could not rebuke him, religion would not be wounded by him, and his Saviour would finally receive him with the plaudit he has promised, and the crown he had purchased.

The sublime doxology which follows; the ascription to God, of all power, praise, and dominion, glory and immortality; the fervour of his mind, rapt as it seems to be with the present view of the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, Lord of lords, immortal, invisible, unapproachable, and surrounded with visions of glory,—do not make the apostle forget to revert to the main object of his charge, the danger of riches; or rather the anticipation of future bliss had fired his soul with more intense zeal against that sin which he thought most likely to shut out his beloved converts from the enjoyment of

it; 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches.'

Having thus shown the nature of riches—'uncertain' in every thing but their danger,—he soon despatches the concluding and most pleasant part of his office, by showing how the Christian use of riches may convert a snare into a blessing; an instrument of ruin into an evidence of faith. He proposes a scheme of moral usury, shows that there is a species of avarice which he not only allows, but enjoins, *that they who are rich in this world* increase the interest of their money by laying it out in good works; that *they lay up in store against the day to come;* against a remoter period than that for which the covetous provide. This is beating the miser at his own weapons; this is indeed giving perpetuity to riches; what they lay out for the poor they lay up for themselves, by *lending unto the Lord.* This is a legitimate love of money, this is a covetousness worthy of a Christian. This is indeed lodging their treasure beyond the reach of moth, rust or thieves.

He cautions them against the love of riches from their *uncertainty;* an argument likely to weigh with those who are blind to higher considerations; an argument more illustrated *to us* by actual instances in the late frenzy of revolution, than any other period of history. He then contrasts what is uncertain with what is solid and durable. That confidence which is not to be placed in 'uncertain riches,' he directs to be transfered to 'the living God,' the foundation of all substantial opulence, the giver of all the good that is enjoyed; the giver of all 'the power to get wealth,' and of the heart to use it to his glory. This readiness 'to distribute,' this willingness 'to communicate,' these unequivocal fruits of faith, obedience, and love, not the purchase of heaven but the evidences of faith in him who died to purchase it for them, will not be rejected by real Christians, after HIS declaration, 'inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

When we consider the contradiction which the lives of some authors, on religious subjects, form with their writings, may they not be said somewhat to resemble the workmen employed in building the ark? These infatuated men spent years in preparing an asylum from the deluge, without practically believing that it would ever take place. While they were mechanically employed in working for the salvation of the others, their labour made no provision for their own safety. The sweeping flood descends; but the builders are excluded from the very refuge which they have assisted in providing!

How different was the conduct of our apostle? His exhortation in this, as in all other instances, derives great additional weight from the consistency of his conduct with his writings. The philosopher Seneca, composed his excellent book of Ethics, in the same city, and near the same time in which this Epistle to Timothy was written. He suffered also a violent death under the same Roman emperor with Saint Paul. In the writings of the philosopher are many beautiful passages directed against the vice we have been considering, and no one ever inveighed more pointedly against the luxurious indulgences to which riches are applied. Yet Seneca, first the disciple of the abstinent school of Pythagoras, and afterwards of the self-denying sect of the Stoics, made himself, by his inordinate desire of amassing wealth, the richest man in Rome, and by his passion for splendour the most magnificent.

This inconsistency of profession with practice, at once illustrates the exact difference between speculation and conviction, conceit and truth; and serves, without any other arguments which, however, are not wanting, to demonstrate the real character of Seneca. Though acquainted probably with the religion of Jesus Christ, and not improbably with our apostle himself, from his near connection with Gallio, one of Paul's judges; yet he can never be considered as its convert; and trying them by the testimony of their lives, we are obliged to conclude of these two martyred moralists, that Paul lived a Christian, and Seneca died a Heathen.

CHAP. XV.

On the genius of Christianity, as seen in Saint Paul.

HAD a sinful human being, ignorant of Christianity, labouring under the convictions of a troubled conscience, and dreading the retribution which that conscience told him his offence merited,—had such a being, so circumstanced, been called upon to devise the means of pardon and acceptance from an offended Creator, how eagerly, in the hope of relieving his tormented spirit, would he have put his imagination to the stretch! How busily would he have sharpened his invention, to suggest something difficult, something that should have exhausted all human means, that should put nature to the rack —penances, tortures, sacrifices,—all Lebanon for a burnt offering, thousands of rams for an atonement, rivers of oil for an oblation,—still concluding that he must perform the act with his own hands, still expecting that himself must be the agent of his own deliverance.

But when a full offer of peace, of pardon, of reconciliation, comes from the offended party, comes voluntarily, comes gratuitously, comes, not with the thunders of the burning mount, but in the still small voice of benignity and love, —free love, benignity, as unsought as unmerited;—when the trembling penitent is assured, in the cheering words of our apostle, that he shall be 'justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,'—when he is assured that all that is demanded on his part of the compact is to accept the propitiation made for his sins, through the forbearance and tender mercy of God; when he hears that to him, and not to him only, but to all who will accept it on the offered terms of faith and repentance, this previously inconceivable proposal is made;—who would doubt that, overwhelmed with joy and gratitude at the report of a world redeemed, he would eagerly fly to lay hold on an offer, not

only beyond his hope or expectation, but beyond his possibility of conception?

Yet is not the fact too often directly the reverse? His pride had suggested to him, that if some difficult thing were to be done, he should have done it himself,—if something were to be suffered in the way of hardship and austerity, or something achieved in the way of glorious enterprise; something that should be splendid in the act, which should bring renown to the doer,—then his natural powers would be set at work, his energies exerted, his emulation kindled, for he would become the procurer of his own reward, the purchaser, or rather the rightful possessor of a heaven of his own earning.

But while God, by a way of his own devising, by a process of his own conducting, had made foolish the wisdom of this world, and baffled the vain and impracticable schemes of impotent man, for effecting his deliverance by any conception or act of his own,—does not man's unwillingness to partake of the offered mercy, look as if his proud heart did not choose to be freely forgiven, as if his haughty independence revolted at the plan, in which, though he has all the benefit, he has none of the merit? Does it not seem as if he would improve the terms of the treaty? as if he would mend the plan of salvation, and work it up into a kind of partnership scheme, in which his own contribution should have the predominance?

But it will be urged men do not say this; we reply, they do not profess it in words; but do not some say it virtually, when they practically decline the terms; or, if they do not entirely disbelieve them, give at least a reluctant, and partial and qualified assent?

With the genius of Christianity, with its peculiarities, with its applicableness to the wants of man, the whole soul of Saint Paul was singularly imbued. His acute mind, his lofty qualities, his penetrating spirit, and his renovated heart, entered profoundly into the character and essence of the gospel. His mind was a transcript of divine truth; his life an exemplification of it. What he conceived intimately, he imparted explicitly. To combat the rebellion of the natural man, against the salvation wrought for him, is the leading object of his endeavour. He who was always looking unto Jesus, as the author and finisher of his own faith, uniformly holds him out to others as the sum and substance of theirs.

He delights to dwell on the divine compassion; he introduces it under every form, he illustrates it by every figure, he magnifies it under every mode of expression. Reconciliation is the grand object of his mission. He exhibits the difference between the conduct of the Redeemer, and that of man, in this negociation. In human cases it is usually the offender who makes the advances, who tries all means to recover the friend he has lost, the patron he has offended. But here he shows it to be just the reverse. Here it is the insulted benefactor, here it is the injured friend, who conjures the offender to return, who entreats the enemy to be reconciled, who promises not only pardon but immunity, not only oblivion but reward. The penitent is every where encouraged to believe, that his offences are forgiven, that his sins have been punished in his Saviour; that the Judge has not only pardoned the malefactor, but has suffered in his stead.

The apostle demonstrates, that God is the fountain, not only of our mercies, but of our virtues—if we turn, it is he who turns us—if we pray, it is he who invites us—if we apply to him, it is he who first draws us—if we repent, it is 'the grace of God which leads us to repentance.' Whatever right thing there may be in us, it is not our natural property, but his gift. His bounty is the spring from which our goodness, if we have any, flows, instead of our goodness being the original motive of his love.

Hitherto we have sketched, though very superficially, Christianity as to its spirit, its design, its offers. We now turn to what is our more immediate object, its practical effects, its general results, its tranforming nature, its renovating power.

If the law of God is spiritual, it is not a conformity to its letter, nor is it partial conformity, to its spirit, that constitutes Christian obedience. Christian obedience is ascertained by its universality. It esteems *all* God's precepts concerning *all* things to be right; it hates *every* false way. The prohibitory as well as the preceptive principle of the gospel is general. Though it makes much allowance for the infirmity of the act, it makes none as to its spirit; it confines its prescription to no particular duties, makes no exception for favourite virtues, to the exclusion of such as are more difficult, or less palatable. If Scripture had barely *informed* us, that it was the perfection of the Christian character, to unite in itself, not only different, but opposite qualities; if we had been only *told* that firmness is little worth, unless combined with meekness; that integrity is imperfect, if separated from humility; that the warmest zeal for the good of others, must, in order to be acceptable, be connected with the most vigilant attention to our own heart; that generosity is a spurious virtue, if disconnected with self-denial; that religion requires, with a consciousness of divinely infused strength, a deep sense of our own helplessness; that while it demands a trust in God, so complete, that we must renounce every other trust, it demands also a holiness so exact, as if we trusted only in ourselves.

If we had been only shown, in some thin theory, that it is the genius of Christianity thus to amalgamate contraries, to blend into one common principle, the deepest self-abasement with the most active exertions,—if all this had been proposed to us in an abstract way, or drily and didactically taught, we should have conceived Christianity to be a system of pleasing paradoxes, an invention of beautiful impracticabilities; we should have thought it an institution fabricated for some world, different from ours, for some race of immaculate beings, for angels who had stood firm in their pristine purity, for creatures who had never lost the impression of the Divine image; but never could we have imagined it to be a practical religion, intended for the fallible, peccable children of fallen mortality.

It has, however, as we observed in an early

chapter, pleased Infinite Wisdom to give us, in the sacred records, striking solutions of this enigma, actual instances of conflicting attributes in men of like passions with ourselves, men possessing qualities, which would seem to exclude each other, combining contrarieties of excellence. Among these, there is not a brighter exemplification, than the great apostle of the Gentiles.

Yet there is nothing in this high description, which exclusively belongs to Saint Paul. Nothing which does not address itself individually to us. Though converted by a miracle, favoured with divine revelations, writing, and frequently acting, under immediate inspiration; yet was he, in the ordinary condition and transactions of life, weak and helpless. Though sustained by Divine power, he did not monopolize it.—Nor was it specially vouchsafed to *him* for his common comforts; or earthly deliverances. It was not given to rescue him from suffering, but to uphold him under it. He was, like his Lord, exposed to all the exigencies of a laborious and afflicted life. He was obnoxious to all its trials, liable to the snares of the world, and to the temptations of the great spiritual enemy. If his conflicts were more in number, and greater in magnitude than ours, he obtained victory over them, by a power to which he directs *us*, a power to which we have equal access. The same sincerity of petition will procure the same gracious assistance; that grand resolver of doubt, that omnipotent vanquisher of difficulty—*my grace is sufficient for thee*—though directly addressed to Saint Paul, is also, through him, addressed to every one of us.

It was probably a charge brought against Saint Paul, that his conversion contributed little to the improvement of his moral and civil virtues. But such an allegation, if made, must have come from the party which he had quitted. They considered him as an apostate from the faith; they considered his zeal for the religion which he had once persecuted, as a degrading inconsistency, as a defection from all moral goodness. His subsequent life, which afforded the most lively comment on the new doctrines, is the best answer to such an allegation. His perseverance afforded a rational conviction, that the change was neither the effect of fear nor of fancy. A conduct corresponding to his first emotions, and a continually growing excellence, completely repel the charge.—He who in the first moment of alarm, exclaimed, *what wilt thou have me to do? did* through life all which he then desired to be taught.

Every convert should endeavour to produce in his measure and degree, the same proofs that he too is under no deception; he should give the same evidence, that he is misled by no fanciful illumination; and this can only be effected by exhibiting a change of conduct, not only obvious, but permanent; not only during the first terrors or transports of which we so frequently hear, but by a steady consecration of his whole future life to his Creator. Every other plea may be illusion, may be hypocrisy; while this test, being visible, will be incontrovertible. The more the penitent is observed; the more this paramount evidence will eventually remove all doubts. By his patient continuance in well-doing, he will be likely to lessen the objection not only to the individual professing it, but to the doctrine itself.

When we compare this blessed apostle, who now fears to wound the *feelings* of others, with the same man who had lately no regard even for their *lives;* the man who now treats with tenderness the very prejudices of Christians, with him who 'before made havoc of the church;'—the man whom we find weeping over all sufferings but his own, with him who had persecuted 'to the death;' when we consider him who aforetime was 'binding and imprisoning the followers of Jesus,' now burning with zeal for his cause, though he knew that punishments the most severe awaited himself; him who had been assisting at the death of the first martyr, now heroically pursuing that course which he was forewarned would lead to his own martyrdom; the man who 'destroyed them who called on the name of Jesus,' now 'confounding the Jews, and proving that this is indeed the very Christ'—shall we, when we see these astonishing results, refuse our homage to the transforming genius of Christianity—to that power which enabled this fierce assailant to 'put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?'

Saint Paul did not furnish such authentic evidence of that power of God which produced this total revolution in the character, merely by suffering death in confirmation of his faith—for error has had its confessors, and idolatry its martyrs,—but he proved it by the persevering holiness of a long and tormented life; he proved it, by suffering himself as courageously as he taught others to suffer. May we venture to add, he gave a testimony, less accredited perhaps, but almost more convincing. The conceited Pharisee is become the humblest of men; the proud bigot is meekness personified.—This *change of disposition* is the surest test of his total renovation. The infusion of a heavenly temper, where a bad one had predominated, is one of the rarest results of Almighty Power. And it not only affords a substantial proof of the individual improvement, but furnishes one of the most striking displays of the distinguishing character of our religion.

It is owing to this specific character of Christianity that, while philosophy had gloried in its wisdom, Saint Paul glories only in his weakness. If he ever exults, it is in the strength of the hand which employs him. His confidence in this supernatural strength explains his paradox, *when I am weak then I am strong.* Sometimes, indeed, he boasts of himself, but it is always of his disadvantages. He avows his determination not to avail himself of any personal acquirements; and after his utmost success in 'winning souls,' he expressly disclaims that *excellency of speech* which others consider as the grand instrument for converting them. He strips himself of all ground of boasting; acknowledges that he comes *in weakness, in fear, in much trembling;* and requires that the glory of every success which attended his labours might be wholly ascribed to God. He demonstrates that all the wisdom

with which the world had been dazzled, was to be eclipsed by that *hidden wisdom* 'which none of the princes of this world knew,' and their ignorance of which was the only extenuation that he offers of their guilt in 'crucifying the Lord of Glory.'

The same trials seem in some measure to have been reserved for Saint Paul which had been sustained by his Lord. This was perhaps determined, that he might glorify God by meeting them in the same spirit; and thus might leave a human example of the highest Christian attainment. Of Jesus it is recorded, that 'his disciples all forsook him and fled.' Like him Saint Paul declared, in his last appearance before the Roman tribunal, 'no man stood by me, but all men forsook me.' As the Master had prayed for his cruel enemies,—'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,' so Paul interceded for his faithless—'I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.' Even under this severest blow to natural feelings, the desertion of those we love, holy Paul forgets not to glorify 'the Lord, who stood by him, and strengthened him;' and who enabled him to act a part consistent with his Christian profession, and to bear an honourable testimony to the truth of the Gospel before his persecuting judges.

Thus again did he resemble his great Exemplar, 'who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession.' And may we not suppose that this example of heroic constancy assisted in sustaining our Latimers and our Ridleys, when, by manifesting a similar spirit under similar sufferings, they showed their cause and their confidence to be so nearly allied to those of the apostle?

Nor does Christianity, (as we shall have occasion to observe more at large hereafter,) limit the exercise of this temper to apostles and martyrs, but enjoins it under the inferior trials of common life.

Finally, the judgments of heaven bore the same kind of testimony to the truth of the Gospel, in the prison at Philippi, as it had done on the Mount of Calvary. In the one instance, 'Behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.' In the other, 'Suddenly there was a great earthquake, the foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors were opened, the chains were loosened, the captives were freed, the jailor was converted!' Are not all these circumstances, taken together, a clear solution of Saint Paul's otherwise obscure declaration, that he thus *filled up what remained of the sufferings of Christ*? Did the sense of victory, did the joys of peace, did the honourable scars brought from the field of battle, ever excite such a feeling in the mind of the conqueror as Saint Paul felt at thus *bearing in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus*, and at the encouragement they gave him to achieve new conquests?

What a strange use does Paul immediately make of his scourgings and imprisonment at Philippi? He uses them as an argument *why his entrance into Thessalonica was not in vain!* His shameful treatment at the former place, instead of intimidating him from further services, redoubled his courage to preach to the Thessalonians that very Gospel which had procured him such disgraceful treatment at Philippi. On this occasion he adduces a touching instance of the effect of his imprisonment, which, though striking, is not singular to those who understand the genius of Christianity. His unjust captivity, as the champion of the new faith, which, in the opinion of those to whom the motive principle of our religion is unknown, would have been likely to extinguish the flame, had only served in his estimation to fan it. Others, timid before, 'grew more confident,' by the very bonds which were intended to discourage them. Their fears were absorbed in their faith, and the chains of the Saint caused a wider and more rapid diffusion of that Gospel which they were intended to stop. And though 'some preached Christ of contention,' yet holy Paul was so exhilarated by the general success, that he was less solicitous about the motives of the instructor, than the progress of the instruction. He looked for the benefit rather from the power of the Gospel, than from the purity of the preacher.

We have repeatedly observed, that an ardent affection was one of the prominent features in Saint Paul's character: it is natural, therefore, that the expression of this temper should be particularly stamped on his writings. If he expresses this satisfaction with more unmingled delight to any one church than another, it seems to be to that which he had planted at Philippi. He appears to repose himself with grateful joy on their fidelity, and with assured hope in their progress. In every prayer he makes request for them, with a joy, which manifested the dependence he had on their perseverance. This was a proof that his 'confidence' did not abate the necessity of his supplications, though he made them with a joy which this confidence inspired. While his knowledge of the fluctuations of the human heart led him to rejoice with trembling, yet the continuance of this favoured church in the principles into which they had been initiated by his visit to them ten years before, gave him a reasonable ground of their persevering steadfastness.

This church afforded an eminent proof not only of its attachment to Paul, its founder, but of its zeal for Christianity. Not satisfied with advancing the credit of religion, and assisting its ministers in their own country, with a truly catholic spirit, these Philippian converts repeatedly sent money to Paul at Thessalonica, that, by relieving the Christians there from the expense which would attend the establishment of the Gospel, they might be led to conceive a higher idea of the religion itself by the disinterestedness of its ministers. This generous superiority to any lucrative views, gave Paul a marked advantage over their philosophical teachers, who bestowed no gratuitous instruction.

The apostle gratefully considers it as one of the practical effects of the confirmed piety of his beloved Philippians, that they were so liberally kind to himself; he received their affectionate services to the aged, afflicted, and now imprisoned servant of Jesus Christ, as a proof of their fealty to his Lord. An ambassador, though in bonds, will still be considered as a representative of his king, by every liege subject.

With what cordiality does he solemnly attest the Omniscient to the truth of his attachment to them, and his desire to see them!

Highly, however, as he estimates their religious improvement, he does not consider them as having attained that elevation of character which renders monition superfluous, or advancement unnecessary; for he exhorts even 'as many as be perfect,' that they press forward and reach forth unto those things which are before: in his usual humble way identifying himself with those he is admonishing—'Let us be thus minded.'

Again—'Though he is confident that he that begun a good work in them,' will accomplish it, yet they must still work out their salvation; but lest they might be tempted to value themselves on their exertions, they are instantly reminded who it is that 'worketh in them to will and to do.' Though they *professed* the Gospel, 'their conversation must be such as becometh it.' To accomplish his full desire, their love, already so great, must 'abound more and more.' Nor would he be satisfied with an ignorant or disorderly piety—their love must manifest itself *more and more* 'in knowledge and judgment:' in knowledge, by a perpetual acquisition; in judgment, by a practical application of that knowledge.

How little, in the eyes of the sober Christian, does the renowned Roman, who, scarcely half a century before, sacrificed his life to his appointment, at this very Philippi, appear, in comparison of the man who addressed this epistle to the same city! Saint Paul was not less brave than Brutus, but his magnanimity was of a higher strain. Paul was exercised in a long series of sufferings, from which the sword of Brutus, directed by any hand but that of Paul himself, would have been a merciful deliverance. Paul, too, was a patriot, and set a proper value on his dignity as a Roman citizen. He too was a champion for freedom, but he fought for that higher species of liberty

'Unsung by Poets, and by Senators unprais'd.'

Was it courage of the best sort, in the Roman enthusiast for freedom, to abandon his country to her evil destiny, at the very moment when she most needed his support? Was it true generosity or patriotism, after having killed his friend, to whom he owed his fortune and his life,* usurper though he was, voluntarily to leave this adored country a prey to *inferior* usurpers? Though Cæsar had robbed Rome of her liberty, should Brutus rob her of his own guardian virtues? Why not say to the Romans, as Paul did to the Philippians—*Though I desire to depart, nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you?* This would have been indeed patriotism, because it would have been disinterested. Was not Paul's the truer heroism? He also was in a *strait between two* events, life and death. He knew what Brutus, alas! did not know, 'that to die was gain;' but, instead of deserting his cause, by a pusillanimous self-murder, he submitted to live for its interest. The gloomy despair of the Stoic, and the cheerful submission of the Saint, present a lively contrast of the effects of the two religions on two great souls.

It is a coincidence too remarkable to be passed over in silence, that Paul was directed by '*a vision from heaven*' to go to Philippi; that Brutus was summoned to the same city by his *evil genius*. The hero obeyed the phantom; the apostle was 'not disobedient to the heavenly vision;' to what different ends, let the concluding histories of the devoted suicide and the devoted martyr declare! Will it be too fanciful to add, that the spectre which lured the Roman to his own destruction, and the vision which in the same place invited the apostle to preach salvation to others, present no unapt emblem of the opposite genius of Paganism and Christianity.

* At the battle of Pharsalia.

CHAP. XVI.

Saint Paul's respect for constituted authorities.

The Gospel was never intended to dissolve the ancient ties between sovereign and subject, master and servant, parent and child, but rather to draw them closer, to strengthen a natural by a lawful and moral obligation. As the charge of disaffection was, from the first, most injurious to the religion of Jesus, it is obvious why the apostle was so frequent, and so earnest, in vindicating it from this calumny.

It is apparent from every part of the New Testament, that our Lord never intended to introduce any change into the civil government of Judea, where he preached, nor into any part of the world to which his religion might extend. As his object was of a nature specifically different, his discourses were always directed to that other object. His politics were uniformly conversant about his own kingdom, which was not of this world. If he spake of human governments at all, it was only incidentally, as circumstances led to it, and as it gave occasion to display or enforce some act of obedience. He discreetly entangled the Pharisees in the insidious net which they had spread for him, by directing, in answer to their ensnaring question, that the things which belonged even to the sovereign whom they detested, should be 'rendered' to him.

Saint Paul exhibited at once a striking proof of the soundness of his own principles, and of the peaceable character of Christianity, in his full and explicit exposition of the allegiance due to the ruling powers. His thorough conviction that human nature was, and would be, the same in all ages, led him to anticipate the necessity of impressing on his converts the duty of rescuing the new religion, not only from present reproach, but from that obloquy to which he foresaw that it would always be exposed.

He knew that a seditious spirit had been alleged against his Lord. He knew, that as it was with the master so it must be with the servant. One was called a 'pestilent fellow;' another 'a stirrer-up of the people:' others were charged with 'turning the world upside down.'

These charges, invented and propagated by the Jews, were greedily adopted by the persecuting Roman emperors, and their venal instruments; and have always been seized on and brought forward as specious pretences for exile, proscription, massacre.

Many of the Protestant Reformers were afterwards accused, or suspected, of the same factious disposition; and if a similar accusation has not been boldly produced, it has been insidiously implied, against some of the most faithful friends of the government, and of the ecclesiastical constitution of our own country; as if a more than ordinary degree of religious activity rendered their fidelity to the state suspicious, and their hostility to the church certain. We do not deny, that though Christianity has never been the cause, it has often been made the pretence for disaffection. Religion has been made the handle of ambition by Popery, and of sedition by some of the Puritan Reformers. Corruption in both cases was stamped upon the very face of those who so used it. Nothing, however, can be more unfair, than *eagerly* to charge religious profession with such dangers, which yet the instances alluded to have given some of our high churchmen a plausible plea for *always* doing. This plea, though in certain cases justly furnished, has been most unjustly used by being applied to instances to which it is completely inapplicable.

For the truth is, that a factious spirit is so far from having any natural connection with the religion of the Gospel, that it stands in the most direct opposition to it. Saint Paul, in taking particular care to vindicate Christianity from any such aspersion, shows that obedience to constituted authorities is among the express commands of our Saviour. He might have added to the strength of his assertion, by adducing his example also; for, in order to be enabled to comply with a law of government, Christ did, what he had never done to supply his own necessities—he wrought a miracle.

The apostle knowing the various shifts of men, from their natural love of gain, to evade paying imposts, is not content with a general exhortation on this head, but urges the duty in every conceivable shape, and under every variety of name, as if to prevent the possibility of even a verbal subterfuge—*tribute*, *custom*, *fear*, *love*, *honour*, *fidelity in payment*; and then, having exhausted particulars, he sums them up in a general—*owe no man any thing*. Thus he leaves not only no public opening, but no secret crevice to fiscal fraud. *

Perhaps it is an evidence, in this instance, rather of the sagacious, than of the prescient, spirit which governed Saint Paul; that there is as much tendency to it now, as when the apostle first published his prohibitory letter. The known principles of human nature, as we have just observed, might lead us to expect it alike in all ages. At the same time, we cannot be too mindful of that command of Inspiration, which, by enjoining us to render to all their dues, has enlarged the sphere of civil duty to the very utmost limit of human actions. And it is no little credit to Christianity, that intimations are so frequently repeated, by *all* the apostles to *all* classes of society, that their having become Christians was the very reason why all their lawful obligations should be the more scrupulously discharged.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul preach the same doctrine, but most judiciously apply their injunctions to the different modes of government under which their several converts lived. Saint Peter, who wrote *to the strangers scattered through Pontus, Asia*, &c. where the governments were arbitrary, orders them *first to obey the king as supreme*. Saint Paul, addressing the people of Rome, where it is well known the emperor and the senate did not always act in concurrence, with his usual exquisite prudence makes choice of an ambiguous expression, *the higher powers*, without specifically determining what those powers were.

Loyalty is a cheap quality, where a good government makes a happy people. It is then an obligation, without being a virtue.—That every man should be obedient to the existing powers, is a very easy injunction to us, who are living under the mildest government, and the most virtuous king. When Paul enjoined his beloved disciple 'to put the people in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates,'—had the Episcopal Titus been acting under the merciful government of the Imperial Titus, Paul might have been denied any merit in giving this authoritative mandate, or the bishop in obeying it; it might have been urged, that the injunctions were accommodated to a sovereign whose commands it would be unreasonable to dispute.

The submission which Saint Paul practised and taught was a trial of a higher order, but though hard, it was not too hard for his principles. To enjoin and to practice implicit obedience, where Nero was the supreme authority, furnished him with a fair occasion for exhibiting his sincerity on this point.—Never let it be forgotten for the honour of Christianity, and of the apostle who published it, that Paul chose to address his precepts of civil obedience to the Christians at Rome, under the most tyrannical of all their tyrants. He commands them to *submit for conscience sake*, to a sovereign, who, —their enemy, Tacitus, gives the relation,— made the martyrdom of the Christians his personal diversion; who burnt them alive by night in the streets, that the flames might light him to the scene of his licentious pleasures.

In the first three centuries, till the Roman government became Christian, there is not, we believe, an instance upon record, of any insurrection against legitimate authority.—Tertullian, in his 'Apology,' challenges the Pagans to produce a single instance of sedition, in which any of the Christians had been concerned; though their numbers were become so great, as to have made their opposition formidable, while the well-known cruel and vengeful principle of their oppressors would have rendered it desperate. Even that philosophical politician Montesquieu acknowledged, that in those countries where Christianity had even imperfectly taken root, rebellions have been less frequent than in other places.

* Romans xiii.

Nor did Saint Paul indemnify himself for his public submission, by privately villifying the lawful tyrant: the emperor is not only not named, but is not pointed at. There is not one of those sly insuendos, which the artful subverters of states know how to employ, when they would undermine the stability of law, without incuring its penalty.—He betrays no symptom of an exasperating spirit, lurking behind the shelter of prudence, and the screen of legal security.

It is observable, that in the very short period, from the origin of Christianity under Augustus to the time at which Saint Paul wrote, there were four successive Roman emperors, each of whom was worse than the preceding, as if it had been providentially so determined, as a test of the meek and quiet spirit of Christianity, whose followers never manifested resistance to any of these oppressive masters.

Paul knew how to unite a respect for the government, with a just abhorrence of the vices of the governor. We are not advocating the cause of passive obedience—but it may be fairly observed, in this connection, that political passions are so apt to inflame the whole mind, that it is dangerous for those, who are professionally devoted to the service of religion, to be too powerfully influenced by them.

I believe there has been no government, under which Christianity has not been able to subsist. When the ruling powers were lenient to it, and especially when they afforded it protection, it has advanced in secular prosperity, and external grandeur; when they have been intolerant, its spirit has received a fresh internal impulse; it has improved in spiritual vigour, as if it had considered oppression only as a new scene for calling new graces into exercise.

With the specific nature of the populace, in all countries, Paul was well acquainted. He knew that till religion has operated on their hearts, they have but one character. Of this character we have many correct, though slight sketches, in the New Testament. Now we hear the stupid clamour of the Ephesian idolaters, vociferating, for two hours, their one* phrase. Then we see that picture of a mob, so exactly alike in all ages, from the uproar in the streets of Ephesus, to the riots in the streets of Westminster; 'the greater part knew not wherefore they were come together.' On another occasion, 'the certainty could not be known for the tumult.' Then their mutable caprice, changing with the impulse of the event, or of the moment. When the viper fastened on Paul's hand, 'he was a murderer,' when he shook it off unhurt, 'he was a god.'† At Lystra the same people who had offered him Divine honours, no sooner heard the false reports of the Jews from Antioch, than *they stoned him and dragged him out of the city as a dead man.*'‡ It was the very spirit which dictated the 'Hosanna' of one day, and the 'crucify him' of the next.

Saint Paul well knew these wayward motions of the mob. He knew also that, without the faculty of thinking, their gregarious habit gave them a physical force, which was a substitute for rational strength; and that this instinctive and headlong following the herd, without reason, without consistency, makes them as formidable by their aggregate number, as they are inconsiderable by their individual weight. Yet, did he ever attempt to turn the knowledge, in which he was so well versed, to a political purpose? Did he ever cajole the multitude, as an engine to lift himself into power or popularity? Did he consider them, as some designing orators have done, the lowest round in ambition's ladder, by which, its foot fixed in the dirt, they strive to scale the summit of public favour; alluring by flattery beings they despise, and paying them by promises, which they know they shall never be able to keep.

Saint Paul's love of order is an additional proof of the soundness of his political character. He uses his influence with the vulgar, only to lead them to obedience. Nor did he content himself with verbal instructions to obey; he seconded them by a method the most practically efficient. Together with order itself, he enjoined on the people those industrious habits which are the very soul of order. He was a most rigorous punisher of idleness, that powerful cherisher of insubordination in the lower orders. Not to eat was the penalty he inflicted on those who would not work. He commands the Thessalonian converts 'to correct the disorderly'—again enjoining, that 'with quietness they work and eat their own bread.'—'Stirrers up of the people' never command them to work: and though they promise them bread, knowing they shall never be able to give it to them, yet they do not, like Paul, command them to eat it in peace. By thus encouraging peaceable and laborious habits, he was at once ensuring the comforts of the people, and the security of the state. Are these exhortations, is this conduct, any proof of that tendency to faction, which has been so often charged on the religion of Jesus?

In his political discretion, as well as in all other points, Paul imitates his Lord. Jesus, in the earlier part of his ministry, was extremely cautious of declaring who he was, never but once owned himself to be the Messiah; when at last, knowing 'that his hour was come,' he scrupled not to express his resentment publicly against the Sanhedrim, by almost the only strong expression of indignation. Which Infinite Wisdom, clothed in Infinite Meekness, ever thought fit to use. Even then, he said nothing against the civil governor.

But while Paul thus proved himself a firm supporter of established authorities, as such, he would not connive at any formal act of injustice; while he resigned himself to the Roman powers, his lawful judges, he would not submit to be condemned illegally by the Jews. When he appealed to Cæsar, he declared with a dignified firmness becoming his character, that though he refused not to die, he would be tried by the rightful judicature.

If it be objected, that, in a single instance, he sharply rebuked Ananias for violating the law, by commanding him to be punished unjustly; he immediately cleared himself from the charge of contumacy, by declaring 'he knew not that it was the High Priest;' and instantly took occasion to extract a maxim of obedience from his

* Acts, xix. † Acts, xxviii. ‡ Acts, xv.

own error; and to render it more impressive sanctioned it by Scriptural authority, *It is written*, thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'*

It must have been obvious to his Pagan judges, that he never interfered with their rights, or even animadverted on their corruptions. His real crime in their eyes, was, not his intermeddling with government, but his converting the people. It was by exposing the impositions of their mercenary priests, by declaring *their idols ought not to be worshipped*, that he inflamed the magistrates; and they were irritated, not so much as civil governors, as guardians of their religion. He knew the consequences of his persevering fidelity, and like a true servant of the true God, never shrunk from them.

To complete the character of his respect to authorities, he sanctifies loyalty, by connecting it with piety. He expressly exhorts the new bishop of the Ephesians,† that throughout his Episcopal jurisdiction, 'prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks be made for kings and all in authority;'—and adds, as a natural consequence of the obligation, arising from the reciprocal connection, 'that subjects may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.' There could not have been devised a more probable method of insuring allegiance; for would it not be preposterous to injure or vilify those, for whom we make it a conscience to pray?

Yet even this important duty may be overestimated, when men's submission to kings is considered as paramount to their duty to 'another king, one Jesus.' An instance of this we have seen exemplified in our own time, though it has pleased Almighty Goodness to overrule it to the happiest results. And among the triumphs of religion which we have witnessed, it is not the least considerable, that, whereas Christianity was originally charged with a design to overturn states and empires, *we* have seen the crime completely turned over to the accusers; *we* have seen the avowed adversaries of Christ become the strenuous subverters of order, law, and government.

To name only one of the confederated band:—Voltaire had reached the pinnacle of literary fame and general admiration, not, it is to be hoped, *for* his impiety, but *in spite* of it. The fearful consequences of his audacious blasphemies were hid behind those graces of style, that gay wit, those fascinating pleasantries, that sharp, yet bitter raillery, which, if they did not conceal the turpitude, decorated it, and obtained, for his profaneness, something more than pardon. His boldness increased with his impunity. He carried it with a high hand, against the whole scheme of revelation; substituting ridicule for argument, and assertion for fact; and then, reasoning from his own misrepresentations, as consequentially as if he had found the circumstances he invented.

But the missile arrows of his lighter pieces, barbed, pointed, and envenomed, (the exact characters of that slender weapon) proved the most destructive in his warfare upon Christianity; and he could replenish his exhaustless quiver, with the same unparalleled celerity with which he emptied it. The keen sagacity of his mind taught him, that witty wickedness is of all the most successful. Argumentative impiety hurts but few, and generally those who were hurt before. Besides it requires in the reader a talent, or at least a taste, congenial with the writer; in this idle age it requires also the rare quality of patient investigation; a quality not to be generally expected, when our reading has become almost as dissipated as our pleasures, and as frivolous as our conversation.

For though Voltaire contrived to make every department of literature the medium of corruption; though the most unpromising and least suspected vehicles were pressed into the service to assist his ruling purpose; yet historical falsehoods might be refuted by adverting to purer sources, unfair citations might be contradicted, by refering to the originals. The popular engine of mischief is not the art of reasoning, but the art of raillery. The danger lies not in the attempt to prove a thing to be false, so much as in the talent which aims to make what is true, ridiculous; not so much in attacking, as in misstating, not in inverting, but in discolouring.

Metaphysical mischief is tedious to the trifling, and dull to the lively. Who now reads the 'Leviathan?' Who has *not* read Candide? 'Political Justice,' a more recent work, subversive of all religious and social order, was too ponderous to be popular, and too dry to answer the end of general corruption. But when the substance, by that chemical process well known to the preparers of poison, was *rubbed down* into an amusing novel, then it began to operate; the vehicle, though made pleasant, did not lessen the deleterious quality.

In Voltaire, a sentiment that cut up hope by the roots was compressed into a phrase as short as the motto of a ring, and as sparkling as the brilliants which encompass it. Every one can repeat an epigram, and even they who cannot understand, can circulate it. The fashionable laughed before they had time to think; the dread of not being supposed to have read, what all were reading, stimulated those who read, in order that they might talk. Little wits came to sharpen their weapons at the forge of this Philistine, or to steal small arms from his arsenal.

The writer of these pages has not forgotten the time when it was a sort of modish competition who could first produce proof that they had received the newest pamphlet from Ferney, by quoting from it; and they were gratified to find that the attributes of intelligence and good taste were appended to their gay studies. Others indulged with a sort of fearful delight, in the perilous pleasure. Even those who could not read, without indignation, did not wait, without impatience. Each successive work, like the book in the Apocalypse, was 'so sweet in the mouth,' that they forgot to anticipate the bitterness of digestion. Or, to borrow a more awful illustration from the same divine source, 'A star fell from heaven on the waters, burning like a lamp, and the star was called Wormwood; and many died of the waters, because they were made bitter.' That bright genius, which might have illuminated the world, became a destructive

* Acts, ch. xxiii. † Timothy.

flame, and, like the burning brand thrown by the Roman soldier into the Temple of Jerusalem, carried conflagration into the Sanctuary.

At length, happily for rescuing the principles, but most injuriously for the peace and safety of society, the polished courtier became a furious anarchist. The idol of monarchical France, the equalized associate of the Royal Author of Berlin, changed his political note, the parasite of princes, and the despot of literature, sounded the trumpet of Jacobinism. The political and moral world shook to their foundation. Earth below trembled. Heaven above threatened. All was insecurity. Order seemed reverting to original chaos. The alarm was given. Britain first awoke, roused by the warning voice of Burke. Enthusiasm was converted into detestation. The horror which ought to have been excited by his impiety was reserved for his democracy. But it was found that he could not subvert thrones with the same impunity with which he had laboured to demolish altars. He gave, indeed, the same impulse to sedition, which he had long given to infidelity, and by his own activity increased the velocity of both. The public feeling was all alive, and his political principles justly brought on his name that reprobation which had been long due to his blasphemies, but which his blasphemies had failed to excite.

Divine Providence seems to have spared him to extreme old age, that by adding one crime more to his long catalogue, his political outrages might counteract his moral mischiefs. But his wisdom seems to have been equally short-sighted in both his projects. While the consequences of his designs against the governments of the world, probably outran his intentions, his scheme for the extinction of Christianity, and for the obliteration of the very name of its author, fell short of it. Peace, law, and order are restored to the desolated nations. Kings are reinstated on their rightful thrones, and many of the subjects of the King of kings, it is hoped, are returned to their allegiance.

The abilities of this powerful but pernicious genius, were not more extraordinary than their headlong, yet diversified course. His talents took their bent from the turn of the age in which he was cast. His genius was his own, but its determination was given from without. He gave impressions as forcibly, as he yielded to them suddenly. It was action and reaction. He lighted on the period, in which, of all others, he was born to produce the most powerful sensation. The public temper was agitated; he helped on the crisis. Revolt was ripening; he matured it. Circumstances suggested his theories; his theories influenced circumstances. He was inebriated with flattery, and mad with success; but his delirious vanity defeated its own ends; in his greediness for instant adoration he neglected to take future fame into his bold but brief account.

'Vaulting ambition overleap'd itself,
And fell on t'other side.'

CHAP. XVII.

St. Paul's attention to Inferior Concerns.

It is one great advantage of epistolary writing that it is not subject to the general laws of composition, but admits of every diversity of miscellaneous matter. Topics which might be thought beneath the dignity of a Treatise, or inconsistent with the solemnity of a Sermon, or the gravity of a Dissertation, find their proper place in a letter. Details of which are not of the first importance, may yet be of such a nature as to require notice or animadversion.

The epistolary form has also other advantages; it not only admits of a variety of subjects, but of the most abrupt transition, from one subject to another, however dissimilar. It requires not the connecting links of argumentative composition, nor the regularity of historical, nor the uniformity of ethical; nor the method and arrangement of each and of all these. The free mind, unfettered by critical rules, expatiates at will, soars or sinks, skims or dives, as the objects of its attention may be elevated or depressed, profound or superficial.

Of the character of this species of writing, the authors of epistles of the New Testament have most judiciously availed themselves. Saint Paul, especially, has taken all due advantage of the latitude it allows. His epistles, though they contain the most profound reasoning, and on the most important subjects on which the mind of man can be engaged, are not, exclusively, regular discussions of any set topics; though they breathe strains of devotion almost angelic, yet do they also frequently stoop to the concerns of ordinary life: partaking, as occasion requires, of all that familiarity, versatility, and ease, which this species of writing authorizes. Yet though occasional topics and incidental circumstances are introduced, each epistle has some particular drift, tends to some determined point, and, amidst frequent digressions, still maintains a consistency with itself, as well as with the general tendency of Scripture; the method being sometimes concealed, and the chain of argument not obvious, the closest attention is required, and the reader, while he may be gathering much solid instruction, reproof or consolation, from scattered sentences, and independent axioms, will not, without much application of mind, embrace the general argument.

Amidst, however, all the higher parts of spiritual instruction; amidst all the solidity of deep practical admonition, there is not, perhaps, a single instance in which this author has omitted to inculcate any one of the little morals, any one even of what may be called those minor circumstances, which constitute the decorums and decencies of life. Nor does his zeal for promoting the greatest actions, ever make him unmindful of the grace, the propriety, the manner in which they are to be performed.

It is one of the characteristic properties of a great mind that it can, 'contract as well as dilate itself;' and we have it from one of the highest human authorities, that the mind which cannot do both is not great in its full extent.* The minuter shades of character do not of themselves make up a valuable person; they may be possessed in perfection, separate from great excel-

* Lord Bacon.

lence. But as that would be a feeble mind, which should be composed of inferior qualities only, so that would be an imperfect one, in which they were wanting. To all the strong lines of character, Saint Paul added the lighter touches, the graceful filling up which finish the portrait.

In a character which forcibly exhibits all the great features of Christianity, these subordinate properties do not only make up its completeness, they give also an additional evidence of the truth and perfection of a religion which makes such a provision for virtue, as to determine that nothing which is right, however inconsiderable, can be indifferent. The attention to inferior duties is a symptom of a mind not satisfied with its attainments, not so full of itself, as to fancy that it can *afford* to be negligent; it is indicative of a mind humble enough to be watchful, because it is suspicious of itself; of a conscience ever on its guard, that its infirmities may not grow into vices, nor its occasional neglects into allowed omissions. But it is chiefly anxious, that its imperfections may not be brought as a charge against religion itself; for may not its enemies say, if he is neglectful of small and easy duties, which cost little, is it probable that he will be at much pains about such as are laborious and difficult? Saint Paul never leaves an opening for this censure. He always seems to have thought small avenues worth guarding, small kindnesses worth performing, small negligences worth avoiding: and his constant practical creed is, that nothing that is a sin is small; that nothing that is right is insignificant. But Saint Paul was an accurate master of moral proportion. He took an exact measure of the positive and relative value of things. If he did not treat small objects as great ones—If he did not lift proprieties into principles, he by no means overlooked them; he never wholly neglected them. He graduated the whole scale of doctrine, and of action, of business and of opinion, assigning to every thing its place according to its worth.

Though he did not think the dissention in religious opinions between two individuals, Euodias and Syntyche* of as much importance as the contentions and schisms in the church of the Corinthians, yet he thought it of sufficient importance to be healed; and anxiously desired to reconcile them, to 'make them of one mind in the Lord.' He knew that disunion is not only unfavourable to the piety of the persons at variance, but that, while it gratifies the enemies, it injures the cause of religion.

But if he gives their due importance to inferior, though necessary duties, he draws a still nicer line in regard to matters in themselves indifferent. The eaters of herbs and the eaters of flesh are alike, in his estimation, as to the act; but when the indulgence in the latter becomes a temptation to an undecided believer, then, even, this trifling concession was no longer a matter of indifference. It became then a just ground for the exercise of self-denial, which perhaps he was not sorry to have the opportunity of enforcing.

* Philippians, ch. iv.

He knew that there were persons who profess to have made a great proficiency in piety, who are not defective in point of cheap attainment, but *are* defective in the more difficult attainments which involve self-denial; persons who, though very spiritual in their conversation, are somewhat selfish in their habits; who talk much of faith, and yet decline the smallest sacrifice of ease; who profess to do all for Christ, but do little for his poor members. He wished to see a high profession always accompanied with a corresponding practice. The Israelites, who were so forward to exclaim, 'all that the Lord hath commanded us we will do,' went and made them a golden calf.

In the mind of our apostle, all is consistent. He that said, 'Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus,' said also, *let all things be done decently and in order.* Right things must be done in a right manner. This simple precept indicates the soberness of Paul's mind. An enthusiast has seldom much dislike to disorderly conduct; on the contrary, he has generally a sovereign contempt for small points, indeed for every thing which does not exclusively tend to advance the one object, whatever that may be, which is nearest his heart.

Saint Paul sometimes appends small objects to great ones, thus increasing their importance by their position. Immediately after giving his exquisite portrait of charity,* he goes at once to recommend and enforce, by powerful illustrations, certain proprieties of behaviour in the public congregations.—Knowing the readiness of the world to catch at the slightest irregularity in religious professors, he puts them on their guard 'not to let their good be evil spoken of;' but wishes that they might acquit themselves unexceptionably as to manner, in things which were already right as to the matter.

From the high duties of Episcopal dignity, he stoops to the concerns of individuals of the most degraded condition. From the most important points of moral action in women, he descends to the very minutiæ of their apparel. This indicates how well aware he was, that every appearance of impropriety in personal adornment, is an implication of a wrong state of mind. If this seemingly inferior concern was not judged to be beneath the notice of an inspired apostle, surely it ought not to be unworthy the regard of my fair countrywomen.

One might have suspected, in the case of Paul, that the heavy load of cares, and sorrows, and persecutions; with the addition of ecclesiastical affairs, the most extensive and the most complicated, might have excused him from attending minutely to an object so inconsiderable, as the concerns of a poor run-away slave, 'the son of his bonds.'

Yet this once guilty, but now penitent servant, he condescends to make the exclusive subject of a letter to his late master.† This application to Philemon, in behalf of Onesimus, is a model in its kind; sincere, polite, tenderly affectionate to the convicted offender; strong, yet respectfully kind to his friend. In point of ele-

* 1 Corinthians, ch. xiii. and xiv.
† Epistle to Philemon.

gance and delicacy, in every excellence of composition, it may vie with any epistle of antiquity; and is certainly far superior, in ingenuity, feeling, warmth, and argument, to the admired letter of Pliny, in recommendation of his friend Arrianus Maturius.

There are people who sometimes forgive the piety of a man, in consideration of his influence, his reputation, his talents, or some other agreeable quality connected with it.—Genius is accepted by the world as a sort of atonement for religion; and wit has been known to obtain the forgiveness of the gay, for the strict principles of the grave. *Here* is a striking instance of two persons, connected by the closest ties of Christian friendship, who acted on other grounds. Philemon was not ashamed of his pious friend Paul, though a prisoner; nor was Paul ashamed of Onesimus, though a servant.

In urging his request on his friend, the apostle does not adopt the corrupt practice of too many, who, in order to put the person addressed in good humour, preface their petition by flattering him on some point, where, perhaps, he least deserves it. Paul, notwithstanding he would have reprobated such insincerity, yet thought it fair to remind Philemon of his high principles; thus indirectly to furnish him with a standard to which he expected his friend would act up.

He then proceeds to press his suit, with all the variety of argument and persuasion of which he was so great a master. His earnestness of entreaty, for so inconsiderable an object, conveys a lesson to ministers and to heads of families, that there is no human being so low as to be beneath their kindness; no offender so great as to be beyond their hope.

He had opened his request with a motive the most calculated to touch the heart of a Christian friend—*that he always made mention of him in his prayers.* This tender plea he follows up with the affectionate commendation of his Christian virtue, that the friend he was beseeching *abounded in love and faith*, not only 'to the Lord Jesus, *but to all saints.*'

After this soothing address, he urges his claims to the boon he was about to ask; in doing which, though he had been always mindful of the dignity of his Apostleship, he chose rather to sink this consideration in the more tender pleas of affection to his friend, and the distressed state of the person for whom he petitioned. 'Paul the aged, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ,' were touching and powerful motives: but what was likely to penetrate a generous mind, was, that the aged and imprisoned Paul, in sending back the penitent servant to his own master, and depriving himself of his attendance, was at once performing an act of justice and of self-denial. He would not detain him from his rightful owner, though he was so great a comfort to himself in his forlorn confinement. It was also a fine occasion of pressing on Onesimus, that the return to his duty would be the surest evidence of his conversion.

Thus anxiously, for an offending slave, does he seek to touch every spring of pity in the heart of his friend. Who would imagine that the man, who thus labours in the cause of so obscure an individual, had the superintendence of all the christian churches in the world?

But, with Paul, rectitude is always the prevailing principle. His zeal for his convert never makes him lose sight of the duty of restitution. Destitute, and a prisoner himself, he offers to make good the loss which Philemon might have sustained by his servant's misconduct. He candidly reminds him, however, how much the spiritual obligations of Philemon (his convert also) exceeded in value the debt due to him from Onesimus; though he refuses to avail himself of the plea. Thy servant perhaps owes thee a paltry sum of money—*thou owest me thine own self.*

With his characteristic disinterestedness, he not only thus pathetically pleads for him who was to receive the good, but for him who was to do it; as if he had said—Give me ground to rejoice in this evidence of thy christian benevolence. He farther stimulates him to this act of charity, by declaring the *confidence he had in his obedience;* thus encouraging him to the duty, by intimating the certainty of his compliance. An additional lesson is given to religious professors, not only that their being Christians includes their being charitable, but that no act of charity should infringe on the rights of justice.

We conclude, by remarking on the union of judgment and kindness in Saint Paul's conduct respecting Onesimus. He sends him back to Philemon at Colosse, as a proof, on the part of Onesimus, of penitent humility, and, on the part of Paul, of impartial equity. At the same time, he more than takes away his disgrace, by honouring him with the office, in conjunction with Tychicus, of being the bearer of his public epistle to the Colossian church. He confers on him the farther honour of naming him, in the body of his epistle, as a faithful and beloved brother.

How different is this modest and rational report by an inspired apostle, of a penitent criminal, a convert of his own; one who had survived his crimes long enough to prove the sincerity of his repentance by the reformation of his life;—how different is this sober narrative by a writer who considered restitution as a part of repentance, and humility as an evidence of faith, from those too sanguine reports which are now so frequently issuing from the press, of criminals brought to execution for violating all the laws of God and man!

The Gospel presents us but with one such instance; an instance which is too often pressed into a service where it has nothing to do; yet we far more frequently see the example of the penitent thief on the cross, brought forward as an encouragement to those who have been notorious offenders, than that of Onesimus; though the latter is of general application, and the former is inapplicable to criminals in a Christian country; for the dying malefactor embraced Christianity the moment it was presented to him. This solitary instance, however, no more offers a justification than an example of fanatical fervours; for if it exhibits a lively faith, it exhibits also deep penitence, humility, and self-condemnation. Nor does the just confidence

of the expiring criminal in the Redeemer's power, swell him into that bloated assurance, of which we hear in some late converts.

For in the tracts to which we allude, we hear not only of one, but of many, holy highwaymen, triumphant malefactors, joyful murderers! True, indeed, it is, that good men on earth rejoice with the angels in heaven, over even one sinner that repenteth. We would hope many of these were penitents; but as there was no space granted, as in the case of Onesimus, to prove their sincerity, we should be glad to see, in these statements, more contrition and less rapture. May not young delinquents be encouraged to go on from crime to crime, feeling themselves secure of heaven at last, when they see, from this incautious charity, that assurance of acceptance, which is so frequently withheld from the close of a life of persevering holiness, granted to the most hardened perpetrators of the most atrocious crime?

As it has been observed, that the baskets of the hawkers have *this year* abounded in these dangerous, though doubtless well-meant tracts, may not the lower class in general, and our servants in particular, be encouraged to look for a happy termination of life, not so much to the dying bed of the exemplary Christian as to the annals of the gallows? A few exceptions might be mentioned, honourable to the prudence, as well as to the piety, of the writers of some of these little narratives.

CHAP. XVIII.

Saint Paul on the Resurrection.

Before the introduction of Christianity, so dark were the notices of a state beyond the grave, that it is no wonder if men were little inclined to give up the pleasures and interest of one world, of which they were in actual possession, for the possibility of another, doubtful at best, and too indistinct for hope, too uncertain for comfort.

If a state of future happiness was believed, or rather guessed at, by a few of those who had not the light of revelation, no nation on earth believed it, no public religion in the world taught it. This single truth, then, firmly established, not only by the preaching of Jesus, but by his actual resurrection from the dead, produced a total revolution in the condition of man. It gave a new impulse to his conduct; infused a new vitality into his existence. Faith became to man an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. This anchorage enables him to ride out the blackest storms; and though he must still work out his passage, the haven is near, and the deliverance certain, 'while he keeps his eye to the star, and his hand to the stern.'

The value and importance, then, of this doctrine, seems to have made it an especial object of Divine care. Founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, perhaps it may have afforded one reason, why the long-suffering of God permitted Jerusalem to stand near half a century after this last event had taken place. By this delay, not only the inhabitants of that city, but the multitudes who annually resorted thither, could gain full leisure to examine into its truth. Had the destruction followed immediately upon the crime which caused it, occasion might have been furnished to the Rabbies for asserting, that a truth could not now be authenticated, which was buried in the ruins of the city. Nor would the enemies of Jesus have scrupled any subordination to discredit his pretensions, even though at the expense of a doctrine, which involved the happiness of worlds unborn.

Jerusalem, however, survived for a time, and the doctrine of a resurrection was established for ever. And now, had it been a doctrine of any ordinary import, as Saint Paul was not writing to persons ignorant of the truths of Christianity, but to Christian converts, it might have been less his object to propound it dogmatically, than to develope and expand it; being a thing previously known, acknowledged, and received. In writing a letter, when we allude to facts already notorious, we do not think our notices the less acceptable, because we do not repeat intelligence already popular; while we content ourselves with drawing inferences from it, making observations upon it, or allusions to it. The reader, having in view the same object with the writer, would catch at intimations, seize on allusions, and fill up the implied meaning.

Such, however, was not Saint Paul's conduct with respect to this doctrine. There were indeed, it should seem, among his converts, many sceptical Jews, infected with the philosophising spirit of the Grecian schools, and who doubted, what these last derided, the resurrection of the dead. Consequently, upon every account, Saint Paul is found to give it a peculiar prominence, and on all occasions to bestow upon it more argument and illustration, than on most other tenets of the new faith.

There is no profession, no class of men, whether Jew or Gentile, before whom Paul was not ready to be examined on this subject, and was not prompt to give the most decided testimony. Uniformly he felt the strength of evidence on his side; uniformly he appealed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as a fact established on the most solid basis,—a fact, not first propagated in distant countries, where the facility of imposition would have been greater; not at a distant period of time, when the same objection against it might have been made; but on the very spot where it occurred, at the very moment of its occurrence.

In his writings, also, the same confidence, the same urgency appears. He always adverts to this tenet, as to the main hinge on which the whole of Christianity turns. The more reasoning oppugners of the faith thought, that if this doctrine could be got rid of, either by argument or ridicule, it would subvert the whole fabric of Christianity. It was, in reality, the only *sensible* proof that could be adduced of the immortality of the soul; an opinion which, indeed, many of them professed to entertain, though they would not be indebted to this doctrine for its proof. The more, however, they oppugned, the more

he withstood; and of so high importance did he represent it, that he even makes 'believing in the heart that God hath raised Jesus from the dead,' to be a principal condition of salvation.

We must not judge of the inspired Saint Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the same canons of criticism, by which we pronounce judgment on other writers. Notwithstanding the elevation of his genius, his hand was in a great measure held, by the nature of his subject and his character, from the display of his talents as an author. From the warmth of his feelings, and the energy of his mind, we infer, that he possessed an imagination peculiarly bright. That he subdued, instead of indulging, this faculty, adds worth to his character, dignity to his writing, and confirmation to the truth. To suppress the exercise of a powerful imagination, is one sacrifice more, which a pious writer makes to God. Independently of that inspiration which guided him, his severe judgment would show him, that the topics of which he treated were of too high and holy a nature to admit the indulgence of a faculty rather calculated to excite admiration than to convey instruction.

In considering his general style of composition, we are not to look after the choice of words, so much as to the mind, and spirit, and character of the writer. If, however, we venture to select any one part of Saint Paul's writings, to serve as an exception to this remark, and to exhibit a more splendid combination of excellences than almost any other in his whole works, we should adduce the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he fully propounds the article in question. As our Lord's discourse, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, is the only explicit description of the last judgment; and Saint John's vision, at the close of the Apocalypse, the only distinct view given us of the heavenly glory; so this is the only graphical representation which Scripture has presented to us of this most important and consolatory doctrine, the resurrection of the dead.

The subject of this fifteenth chapter is quite distinct from that which precedes or follows it; it is interposed between matter quite irrelevant to it, forming a complete episode. As a composition, it stands unrivalled for the unspeakable importance of its matter, its deep reasoning, and lofty imagery. Saint Paul sometimes leaves it to others to beat out his massy thoughts into all the expansion of which they are so susceptible. His eloquence, indeed, usually consists more in the grandeur of the sentiment than in the splendour of the language. Here both are equally conspicuous. Here his genius breaks out in its full force: here his mind lights upon a subject which calls out all its powers; and the subject finds a writer worthy of itself. It furnishes a succession of almost every object that is grand in the visible and the invisible world. A description becomes a picture; an expostulation assumes the regularity of a syllogism; an idea takes the form of an image; the writer seems to be the spectator; the relator speaks as one admitted within the veil.

According to his usual practice of appealing to facts, as a substratum on which to build his reasoning, he produces a regular statement, in their order of succession, of the different times at which Jesus appeared after his death, authenticated by the unimpeachable evidence of the disciples themselves, by whom he was seen individually, as well as in great bodies. The evidence he corroborates by his own personal testimony at his conversion; an evidence which he produces with sentiments of the deepest self-abasement.

So important, he proceeds, was it to settle the belief of this doctrine, that if it were not true, all their hopes fell to the ground. To insist on this grand peculiarity of the Gospel, was establishing the truth of the whole by a part. It was the consummation of the validity of the mission of Christ. Without this finishing circumstance, what proof could his followers adduce, that his atonement was accepted; that his mediation was ascertained; that his intercession would be available; that his final judgment would take place; that because He was risen, they should rise also! It was not one thing, it was every thing. It was putting the seal to a testament, which, without it, would not have been authentic. It involved a whole train of the most awful consequences. Such a chain of inferences would be destroyed by this broken link, as nothing could repair. In short, it amounted to this tremendous conclusion: 'Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.' You who live in the hope of the redemption wrought for you, 'are yet in your sins.' If Jesus remains under the power of death, how shall we be delivered from the power of sin? If the doctrine be false, then is my preaching a delusion, and your faith a nullity. He adds, that they who were now the happiest of men, in their assured hope of eternal life, would become, 'of all men most miserable;' in short, as in another place he asks, to what purpose has Christ died for our sins, if he has not 'risen for our justification?'

The apostle having shown himself a consummate master of the art of reasoning, by his refutation of the absurdities that would follow an assumption, that Christ was not risen; and having cleared the ground from most of the objections and difficulties which had been thrown in his way, proceeds to the positive assertion, that not only Christ is risen, but that all his faithful followers have their own resurrection ascertained by his.—He illustrates this truth by an apposite allusion to the custom of a Jewish harvest, the whole of which was sanctified by the consecration of the first-fruits.

In his distinguishing characteristics of the different properties of the body of man, in its different states of existence, every antithesis is exact. The body that is sown in corruption, dishonour, and weakness, is raised in incorruption, glory, and power.—The material body is become spiritual.—'The first man was made a living soul,' possessing that natural life communicated by him to all his posterity; but Christ was a quicking spirit, through whom, as from its source, spiritual life is conveyed to all believers.

If Paul uniformly makes every doctrine a fountain flowing with practical uses, it is no wonder that he should make this triumphant consummation of all doctrine subservient to the

great ends of holiness. For it is worthy of remark, that in this very place, with all the interest which his argument excites, in all the heat which his defence kindles, carried away, as he seems to be, by his faith and his feelings, —yet, in his usual manner, he checks his career to introduce moral maxims, to insinuate holy cautions. Not contented to guard the people against the danger of corrupt and corrupting society upon his own principles, he strengthens his argument by refering them to a Pagan poet, whose authority, with some at least, he might think would be more respected than his own, on the infection of 'evil communications.' He suggests ironically, as a practical effect of the disbelief of this truth, the propriety of Epicurean voluptuousness, and even ventures to recommend the utmost indulgence of a present enjoyment, upon the supposition of a death which is to cut off all future hope, and all posthumous responsibility.

Then assuming a loftier note, with an awfully warning voice, he proceeds to this solemn adjuration—'Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God.' As if he had said,—If you give into this incredulity, your practice will become consonant to your belief. Every man will defend his error when it favours his vice. Your evil habits will complete the corruption of your faith. If you find an interest in indulging your mistake, your next step will be to think it true. What is first a wish, will gradually become an opinion; an opinion will as naturally become a ground of action; and what you now permit yourself to do, you will soon become willing to justify.

He produces, as the strongest proof of his belief in the doctrine in question, the complacency of Christians in suffering. Why did others press forward to martyrdom?—Why did he himself expose his life to perpetual peril? Why, but from the firm persuasion, that as Christ was risen, they should rise also. Would not their voluntary trials be absurd? Would it not be madness to embrace, when it was in their power to avoid, all the hardships which embittered life, all the dangers which were likely to shorten it. He and his colleagues were not impassable substances, but feeling men, sensible to pain, keenly alive to suffering, with nerves as finely strung, with bodies as tenderly constituted, with souls as reluctant to misery, as others. Take away this grand motive for patience, rob them of this sustaining confidence, strip them of this glorious prospect, and their zeal would lose its character of virtue, their piety its claim to wisdom. Their perseverance would be fatuity. Mighty then must be their motive, powerful indeed their assurance, clear and strong their conviction, that their brief sorrows were not worthy to be compared with the glories which were insured to them by the resurrection of Christ.

Again, he resumes the task of repelling the more plausible objections. But it is not our business to follow him through all his variety of illustration, all his diversified analogy, all his consecutive reasoning on the nature of the resurrection of the body. Resemblances the most distant, substances the most seemingly dissimilar in themselves, are yet brought together by a skill the most consummate, by an aptness the most convincing. All the objects of our senses, whatever is familiar to the sight, or habitual to the mind, are put in requisition—all the analogies of nature are ransacked—the vegetable, the animal, the terrestrial and the celestial world, are brought into comparison; and the whole is made to demonstrate the truth of this awful doctrine. Such a cluster of images, all bearing upon one point, at once fill the mind, dilate the conception, and confirm the faith.

There is singular wisdom in the selection of these illustrations, not only as being the most apposite, but the most intelligible.—They are not drawn from things abstruse or recondite, but from objects with which all classes are equally acquainted. An incidental, but not unimportant proof of the universal design of Christianity. The most ordinary man is as conversant with the springing up and growth of corn, with the distinction between the flesh of the different animal species, as the philosopher. He can also as clearly discern the exterior distinction between the different luminaries of heaven, as the astronomer. Here is no demand of knowledge, no appeal to science.—Sight is the witness, sense the arbiter in this question.

To bestow immortality on mortals, and to revive the dead, had been pronounced by a heathen author to be beyond the reach of divine power. To the bold Pyrrhonists therefore, who might be among the Corinthians, and who sought to perplex the argument by asking—'how are the dead raised up?—With what body do they come?' he answers peremptorily, by refering them to the great resolver of difficulties—THE POWER OF GOD, inscribed in the book of daily experience—*God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him.* He reminds them, that this divine power they perpetually saw exercised in a wonderful manner in the revolution of seasons in the resuscitation of plants apparently dead; and in the springing up of corn, which dies first, in order that it may live. To that omnipotence which could accomplish the one, could the other be difficult?

Who can pursue without emotion his rapid, yet orderly transition from one portion of his subject to another? The interest still rising till it closes in the triumphant climax of the final victory over the two last enemies, death and the grave! At length by a road, in which deviation does not impede his progress, he reaches the grand consummation. Behold I show you a mystery—we shall not all sleep—but we shall be changed—in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye—at the last trumpet—for the trumpet shall sound—and the dead shall be raised incorruptible—and we shall all be changed. It is almost profane to talk of beauties, where the theme is so transcendant; but this is one of the rare instances in which amplification adds to spirit, and velocity is not retarded by repetition. The rythm adds to the effect, and soothes the mind; while the sentiment elevates it. The idea was not newly conceived in the apostle's mind; he had told the Thessalonians 'the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of an Archangel, and the trump of God.'

His grateful spirit does not forget to remind them to whom the victory is owing, to whom the thanks are due.

In the solemn close, alighting again from the world of light, and life, and glory, he just touches upon earth to drop another brief, but most impressive lesson—that though the victory is obtained, though the last conquest is achieved, though Christ is actually risen—all these ends accomplished, are not to dismiss us from diligence, but to stimulate us to it. They furnish only an additional argument for abounding in the work of the Lord.' It adds animation to the motive, that from this full exposition of the doctrine, they not only *believe*, but they *know*, that their labour is not in vain in the Lord.

With this glorious hope what should arrest their progress? With such a reward in view—eternal life, the purchase of their risen Saviour, he at once provides them with the most effectual spur to diligence, with the only powerful support under the sorrows of life, with the only infallible antidote against the fear of death.

To conclude, this blessed apostle never fails, where the subject is susceptible of consolation as well as of instruction, to deduce both from the same premises. What affectionate Christian will not here revert, with grateful joy, to the same writer's cheering address to the saints of another church, who might labour under the pressing affliction of the death of pious friends?* He there offers a new instance, not only of his never-failing rule of applying the truth he preaches, but of their immediate application to the feelings of the individual. This it is which renders his writings so personally interesting. That the mourner over the pious dead might not 'sorrow as those who have no hope,' after the declaration that 'Jesus died and rose again.' He builds on this general principle, the particular assurance, 'Even them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.'

What a balm to the breaking heart!—What! the loved companion of our youth, the friend of our age, the solace of our life, with whom we took sweet counsel, with whom we went to the house of God as friends, will Christ bring with him? Shall the bliss of our suspended intercourse be restored, unalloyed by the mutual infirmities which here rendered it imperfect, undiminished by the dread of another separation?

Well then might the angel say to Mary at the forsaken tomb, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' Well might Jesus himself repeat the question, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' Tears are wiped from all eyes. 'The voice of joy and thanksgiving is in the tabernacles of the righteous.' 'The right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass.' The resurrection of Christians is indissolubly involved in that of Christ: 'because I live, ye shall live also.'—What are the splendid triumphs of earthly heroes, to HIS triumph over the grave? What is the most signal victory over a world of enemies, to HIS victory over his last enemy? 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

* 1 Thessalonians, iv. 14.

CHAP. XIX.

Saint Paul on Prayer, Thanksgiving, and Religious Joy.

PRAYER is an act which seems to be so prepared in the frame of our nature; to be so congenial to our dependent condition, so suited to our exigencies, so adapted to every man's known wants, and to his possibilities of wants unknown; so full of relief to the soul, and of peace to the mind, and of gladness to the heart; so productive of confidence in God, and so reciprocally proceeding from that confidence, that we should think, if we did not know the contrary, that it is a duty which scarcely required to be enjoined; that he who had once found out his necessities, and that there was no other redress for them, would spontaneously have recourse as a delight, to what he had neglected as a command; that he who had once tasted the bounties of God, would think it a hardship not to be allowed to thank him for them; that the invitation to pray to his Benefactor, was an additional proof of Divine goodness; that to be allowed to praise him for his mercies, was itself a mercy.

The apostle's precept, 'pray always,'—pray evermore, pray without ceasing, men ought always to pray,—will not be criticised as a pleonasm, if we call to remembrance that there is no state of mind, no condition of life, in which prayer is not a necessity as well as an obligation. In danger, fear impels to it; in trouble, we have no other resource; in sickness, we have no other refuge; in dejection, no other hope; in death, no other comfort.

Saint Paul frequently shows the word *prayer* to be a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercourse with God. He represents it to include our adoration of his perfections, our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, of our obligation for his benefits, providential and spiritual; of the avowal of our entire dependance on him, of our absolute subjection to him, the declaration of our faith in him, the expression of our devotedness to him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities, and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants, and for the pardon of our offences; for succour in our distress; for a blessing on our undertakings; for the direction of our conduct, and the success of our affairs.

If any should be disposed to think this general view too comprehensive, let him point out which of these particulars prayer does not embrace; which of these clauses, a rational, a sentient, an enlightened, a dependent being can omit in his scheme of devotion.

But as the multifarious concerns of human life will necessarily occasion a suspension of the exercise; Saint Paul, ever attentive to the principle of the act, and to the circumstances of the actor, reduces all these qualities to their essence, when he resolves them into the *spirit* of supplication.

To pray incessantly, therefore, appears to be, in his view of the subject, to keep the mind in an habitual disposition and propensity to devotion; for there is a sense in which we may be said to *do* that which we are *willing* to do,

though there are intervals of thought, as well as intermissions of the act.—'As a traveller,' says Dr. Barrow, 'may be said to be still on his journey, though he stops to take needful rest, and to transact necessary business.' If he pause, he does not turn out of the way; his pursuit is not diverted, though occasionally interrupted.

Constantly maintaining the disposition, then, and never neglecting the actual duty; never slighting the occasion which presents itself, nor violating the habit of stated devotion, may, we presume, be called 'to pray without ceasing.' The expression 'watching unto prayer,' implies this vigilance in finding, and this zeal in laying hold on these occasions.

The success of prayer, though promised to all, who offer it in perfect sincerity, is not so frequently promised to the cry of distress, to the impulse of fear, or the emergency of the moment, as to humble continuance in devotion. It is to patient waiting, to assiduous solicitation, to unwearied importunity, that God has declared that he will lend his ear, that he will give the communication of his Spirit, that he will grant the return of our requests. Nothing but this holy perseverance can keep up in our minds an humble sense of our dependence. It is not by a mere casual petition, however passionate, but by habitual application, that devout affections are excited and maintained; that our converse with heaven is carried on. It is by no other means that we can be assured, with Saint Paul, that 'we are risen with Christ,' but this obvious one, that we thus seek the things which are above; that the heart is renovated; that the mind is lifted above this low scene of things; that the spirit breathes in a purer atmosphere; that the whole man is enlightened, and strengthened, and purified; and that the more frequently, so the more nearly, he approaches to the throne of God. He will find also, that prayer not only expresses, but elicits the Divine grace.

Yet do we not allow every idle plea, every frivolous pretence, to divert us from our better resolves? Business brings in its grave apology; pleasure its bewitching excuse. But if we would examine our hearts truly, and report them faithfully, we should find the fact to be, that disinclination to this employment, oftener than our engagement in any other, keeps us from this sacred intercourse with our Maker.

Under circumstances of distress, indeed, prayer is adopted with comparatively little reluctance: the mind, which knows not where to fly, flies to God. In agony, nature is no atheist. The soul is drawn to God by a sort of natural impulse; not always, perhaps by an emotion of piety; but from a feeling conviction, that every other refuge is 'a refuge of lies.' Oh! thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, happy if thou art either drawn or driven, with holy David, to say to thy God, 'Thou art a place to hide mé in.'

But if it is easy for the sorrowing heart to give up a world, by whom itself seems to be given up, there are other demands for prayer equally imperative. There are circumstances more dangerous, yet less suspected of danger, in which, though the call is louder, it is less heard; because the voice of conscience is drowned by the clamours of the world. Prosperous fortunes, unbroken health, flattering friends, buoyant spirits, a spring-tide of success—these are the occasions when the very abundance of God's mercies is apt to fill the heart till it hardens it. Loaded with riches, crowned with dignities, successful in enterprise; beset with snares in the shape of honours, with perils under the mask of pleasures; then it is, that to the already saturated heart, 'to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant,' is more in unison than 'what shall I render to the Lord?'

Men of business, especially men in power and public situations, are in no little danger of persuading themselves, that the affairs which occupy their time and mind, being, as they really are, great and important duties, exonerate those who perform them from the necessity of the same strictness in devotion, which they allow to be right for men of leisure; and which, when they become men of leisure themselves, they are resolved to adopt;—but now is the accepted time, here is the accepted place, however they may be tempted to think that an exact attention to public duty, and an unimpeachable rectitude in discharging it, is itself a substitute for the offices of piety.

But these great and honourable persons are the very men to whom superior cares, and loftier duties, and higher responsibilities, render prayer even more necessary, were it possible, than to others. Nor does this duty trench upon other duties, for the compatibilities of prayer are universal. It is an exercise which has the property of incorporating itself with every other; not only not impeding, but advancing it. If secular thoughts, and vain imaginations, often break in on our devout employments, let us allow religion to vindicate her rights, by uniting herself with our worldly occupations. There is no crevice so small at which devotion may not slip in: no other instance of so rich a blessing being annexed to so easy a condition; no other case in which there is any certainty, that to ask is to have. This the suitors to the great do not always find so easy from them, as the great themselves find from God.

Not only the elevation on which they stand makes this fence necessary for their personal security, by enabling them to bear the height without giddiness, but the guidance of God's hand is so essential to the operations they conduct, that the public prosperity, no less than their own safety, is involved in the practice of habitual prayer. God will be more likely to bless the hand which steers, and the head which directs, when both are ruled by the heart which prays. Happily we need not look out of our own age or nation for instances of public men, who, while they govern the country, are themselves governed by a religious principle: who petition the Almighty for direction, and praise him for success.

The duty which Paul enjoins—'praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance,'—would be the surest means to augment our love to God. We gradually cease to love a benefactor of whom we cease to think. The frequent recollection would warm our affections,

and we should more cordially devote our lives to him to whom we should more frequently consecrate our hearts. The apostle therefore inculcates prayer, not only as an act, but as a frame of mind.

In all his writings effectual prayer uniformly supposes accompanying preparatory virtue. Prayer draws all the Christian graces into its focus. It draws Charity, followed by her lovely train—of forbearance with faults; forgiveness of injuries, pity for errors, and relieving of wants. It draws repentance, with her holy sorrows, her pious resolutions, her self-distrust. It attracts Faith, with her elevated eye—Hope, with her grasped anchor—Beneficence, with her open hand—Zeal, looking far and wide to serve—Humility, with introverted eye, looking at home. Prayer, by quickening these graces in the heart, warms them into life, fits them for service, and dismisses each to its appropriate practice. Prayer is mental virtue; virtue is spiritual action. The mould into which genuine prayer casts the soul, is not effaced by the suspension of the act, but retains some touches of the impression till the act is repeated.

Prayer, divested of the love of God, will obtain nothing, because it asks nothing cordially. It is only the interior sentiment that gives life and spirit to devotion. To those who possess this, prayer is not only a support, but a solace: to those who want it, it is not only an insipid task, but a religious penalty. Our apostle every where shows that purity of heart, resignation of spirit, peace and joy in believing, can by no other expedient, be maintained in life, activity, and vigour.—Prayer so circumstanced is the appointed means for drawing down the blessing we solicit, and the pardon we need.

Yet that the best things are liable to abuse is a complaint echoed by all writers of ethics. Certain mystics, pretending to extraordinary illumination, have converted this holy exercise into a presumptuous error. Intense meditation itself has been turned into an instrument of spiritual pride, and led the mistaken recluse to overlook the appointed means of instruction; to reject the scriptures, to abandon the service of the sanctuary, and to expect to be snatched, like holy Paul, up to the third heaven, deserting those prescribed and legitimate methods which would more surely have conducted him thither. The history of the apostle himself presents a striking lesson in this case. 'Let us remember,' says one of the fathers, 'that though Paul was miraculously converted by an immediate vision from heaven, he was nevertheless sent for baptism and instruction to a man.'

Holy Paul calls upon us to meditate on the multitude and the magnitude of the gifts of God. When we consider how profusely he bestows, and how little he requires; that while he confers like Deity, he desires only such poor returns as can be made by indigent, mendicant mortality; that he requires no costly oblation; nothing that will impoverish, but, on the contrary, will inconceivably enrich the giver. When we consider this, we are ready to wonder that he will accept so poor a thing as impotent gratitude for immeasurable bounty. When we reflect, that our very desire to praise him is his gift—that his grace must purify the offering, before he condescends to receive it, must confer on it that spirit which renders it acceptable—that he only expects we should consecrate to Him, what we have received from him—that we should only confess, that of all we enjoy, nothing is our due—we may well blush at our insensibility.

We think, perhaps, as we have observed in another place, had he commanded us 'to do some great thing,' to raise some monument of splendor, some memorial of notoriety and ostentation, something that would perpetuate our own name with his goodness, we should gladly have done it. How much more when He only requires,

Our thanks how due!

When he only asks the homage of the heart, the expression of our dependence, the recognition of his right!

Concerning the duty of intercessory prayer for those we love, the apostle hath bequeathed us a high and holy example. He has given us not only injunctions, but specimens. Observe for what it is that 'he bows his knees to God' in behalf of his friends. Is it for an increase of their wealth, their power, their fame, or any other external prosperity? No: it is that 'God would grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inner man:'—it is that 'Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith;'—that 'they may be rooted and grounded in love,' and this to a glorious end—'that they may be able, with all saints, to comprehend' the vast dimensions of the love of Christ;—that 'they may be filled with all the fulness of God.' These are the sort of petitions which we need never hesitate to present. These are the requests which we may rest assured are always agreeable to the divine will; here we are certain we cannot 'pray amiss.' These are intercessions of which the benefit may be felt, when wealth, and fame, and power shall be forgotten things.

Why does Paul 'pray day and night that he might see the face of his Thessalonian converts?' Not merely that he might have the gratification of once more beholding those he loved—though that would sensibly delight so affectionate a heart—but 'that he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith.'

Here is an instance of a spirit so large in its affections, so high in their object; of a man who had so much of Heaven in his friendships, so much of soul in his attachments, that he thought time too brief, earth too scanty, worldly blessings too low, to enter deeply into his petitions for those to whom time and earth, the transitory blessings of life, and life itself, would so soon be no more.

In exciting us to perpetual gratitude, Saint Paul stirs us up to the duty of keeping before our eyes the mercies which so peremptorily demand it. These mercies succeed each other so rapidly, or rather, are crowded upon us so simultaneously, that if we do not count them as they are received, and record them as they are enjoyed, their very multitude which ought to penetrate the heart more deeply, will cause them to slip out of the memory.

The apostle acknowledges the gratitude due to God to arise from his being the universal proprietor,—*whose I am, and whom I serve;* thus making the obedience to grow out of the dependence. He serves his Maker because he is his property. We should reflect on the superiority of the bounties of our heavenly Father, over those of our earthly friends, not only in their number and quality, but especially in their unremitting constancy. The dearest friends only think of us occasionally, nor can we be so unreasonable as to expect to be the constant object of their attention. If they assist us under the immediate pressure of distress, their cares are afterwards remitted.

Many, besides us, have a claim upon their kindness, and they could not invariably attend to us without being unjust to others. If a man were to lay out his whole stock of affection upon one individual, how many duties must he neglect, how many claims must he slight, how much injustice must he commit, of how much ingratitude would he be guilty! And as an earthly friend cannot divide his benefits, or even the common acts of kindness among an indefinite number, and as human means have limits, so his benevolence can generally be little more than good will. But the exhaustless fund of infinite love can never be diminished;—though the distribution is universal, though the diffusion is as wide as his rational creation, though the continuance is as durable as his own eternity, the beneficence of almighty power needs not, like his creatures, deduct from one because it is liberal to another.

Our kindest friend may not always know our secret sorrows, and with the utmost goodness of intention cannot apply a balsam, where he does not know there is a wound; or it may be a wound deeper than human skill can reach, or human kindness cure. Again, our weaknesses may often weary, and sometimes disgust, even an attached friend; but it is the feeling of these very infirmities with which our divine High Priest is so tenderly touched. His compassion arises from a deep and intimate sense of sympathy—for he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet in no point did he sin.

It is in this view that we become so personally interested in the attributes of God; that they come in so completely in aid of our necessities, and to the supply of our comforts. As his omniscience brings him fully acquainted with all our wants, and his omnipotence enables him to relieve them; so his immortality is pledged for our's, and ensures to us the perpetuity of our blessings. What a glorious idea, that the attributes of the self-dependent and everlasting God are laid out in the service of his children!

But the apostle, not contented with the double injunctions,—*pray ever more; in every thing give thanks*—links to it a most exhilirating duty —*rejoice for ever more.* This single exhortation—*rejoice in the Lord*—is not sufficient, it is reiterated without limit, *again I say rejoice!* But what are the chief causes of Paul's joy?—'that God hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,'—'that he hath delivered us from the powers of darkness,'—'that he hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son'—that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' What is 'his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing!—that he should meet his converts in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

But this blessed saint found surprising subjects of joy, subjects with which a stranger does not desire to intermeddle. *To rejoice in tribulation; to take joyfully the spoiling of his goods; to rejoice in the sufferings of his friends; to rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.* This is, indeed, a species of joy which the world does not desire to take from him, nor to share with him. In the close of the description of his way of life, of which temptation, and trial, and sorrow, and sufferings, are the gradations, the climax is commonly not merely resignation, but triumph: not submission only, but joy.

It is worth our observation, that by perseverance in prayer he was enabled to glory in the infirmity which he had thrice besought the Lord might depart from him. And it is a most impressive part of his character, that he never gloried in 'those visions and revelations of the Lord,' but in the infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions for Christ's sake, which were graciously sent to counteract any elation of heart, which such extraordinary distinctions might have occasioned. Like his blessed Lord, he disclosed all the circumstances of his degradation to the eye of the world, and concealed only those of his glory.

The same spirit of Christian generosity which directed his petitions, influenced also his thanksgivings for his friends. What are the subjects for which he praises God on their behalf?—not that they are enriched or exalted, but 'that their faith groweth exceedingly.' Again to the Philippians, 'holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

But the apostle endeavours most especially to kindle our grateful joy for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; a blessing which, though thrown open to the acceptance of all on the offered terms, is to every believer distinctly personal. He endeavours to excite our praises for every instance of faith and holiness recorded in Scripture. He teaches, us that whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our instruction. The humble believer may claim his share—for in this case appropriation is not monopoly—of every doctrine, of every precept, of every promise, of every example. The Christian may exultingly say, the Holy Scriptures were written for *my* reproof, for *my* correction, for *my* instruction in righteousness. The Holy Spirit, who teaches me to apply it to myself, dictated it for *me.* Not a miracle upon record, not an instance of trust in God, not a pattern of obedience to Him, not a gratulation of David, not a prophecy of Isaiah, not an office of Christ, not a doctrine of an Evangelist, not an exhortation of an apostle, not a consolation of Saint Paul, but has its immediate application to *my* wants; but makes a distinct call on *my* gratitude; but furnishes a personal demand upon my

responsibility. The whole record of the sacred Canon is but a record of the special mercies of God to me, and of his promises to myself, and to every individual Christian to the end of the world.

That Divine Spirit, which dictated the inspired Volume, has taken care that we should never be at a loss for materials for devotion. Not a prophet or apostle but has more or less contributed to the sacred fund, but has cast his mite into the treasury. The writings of Saint Paul, especially, are rich in petitions, abundant in thanksgivings, overflowing in praises. The Psalms of David have enlarged the medium of intercourse between earth and heaven. They have supplied to all ages materials for Christian worship, under every supposeable circumstance of human life. They have facilitated the means of negociation for the penitent, and of gratitude for the pardoned. They have provided confession for the contrite, consolation for the broken hearted, invitation to the weary, and rest for the heavy laden. They have furnished petitions for the needy, praise for the grateful, and adoration for all. However indigent in himself, no one can complain of want who has access to such a magazine of intellectual and spiritual treasure. These variously gifted compositions, not only kindle the devoutest feeling, but suggest the aptest expressions: they invest the sublimest meanings with the noblest eloquence. They have taught the tongue of the stammerer to speak plainly; they have furnished him who was ready to perish for the lack of knowledge, with principles as well as feelings; they have provided the illiterate with the form, and the devout with the spirit of prayer. To him who previously felt not his wants, they have imparted fervent desires, they have inspired the faint with energy, and the naturally dead, with spiritual life.

The writings and the practice of Saint Paul do not less abundantly, than the compositions of David, manifest the supreme power of fervent devotion. The whole tenor of his life proves that his heart was habitually engaged in intercourse with the Father of spirits. His conversation, like the face of Moses, betrays, by its brightness, that he had familiar admission to the presence of God. He exhibits the noblest instance, with which the world has presented us, of this peculiar effect of vital religion: that supplication is the dialect of the poor in spirit, thanksgiving the idiom of the genuine Christian, praise his vernacular tongue.

CHAP. XX.

Saint Paul an Example to Familiar Life.

The highest state of moral goodness is compounded of the avowed properties of ripened habits, growing out of genuine Christian principles, invigorated and confirmed by the energy of the Holy Spirit:—this is evangelical virtue.

Saint Paul contrasts the power of opposite habits with wonderful force in his two pictures, one of the debasing slavery of a vicious mind, and the other of the almost mechanical power of superinduced good habits in a virtuous one: —'*Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*'* What a dominion must holy principles and holy habits have obtained in that mind, when he could say, '*The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*,'—'*I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me!*' Mere morality never rose to this superhuman triumph, never exhibited such a proof of its own power to establish Christian practice. To these rooted habits the sacred writers sometimes apply the term perfection.

Saint Paul, when he speaks of perfection, could only mean that fixedness of principle, and Christian elevation of character, which, under the influence of Divine grace, is actually attainable; he could not mean to intimate that he expected man to be freed from liability to error, to be completely exempted from the inroads of passion, to be no longer obnoxious to deviations and deflections from the law, by which he is yet mainly guided and governed. He could not expect him to be entirely and absolutely delivered from the infirmities of his frail and fallen nature. But though this general uniformity of good habits may occasionally, through the surprise of passion and the assaults of temptation, be in some degree broken, yet these invaders are not encouraged, but repelled: though some actions may be more imperfect, and some wrong tempers may still unhappily intrude themselves, yet vigilance and prayer obtain such a power of resistance, as finally almost to subdue these corruptions; and those that are not altogether conquered, but occasionally break out, induce a habit of watchfulness over the suspected places, and keep the heart humble, by a feeling of these remains of infirmity.

But even here, such are the stratagems of the human heart for concealing its corruptions, not only from others, but from itself, that it is incumbent on every individual so to examine, as clearly to discover, his own real character; to inquire, whether he is at the same time sincerely mourning over his remaining disorders, and earnestly desiring and diligently cultivating a new vital principle of faith and holiness; or whether he has only been making a certain degree of improvement in this or that particular quality, while he continues both destitute and undesirous of this vital principle, which is the first seed of the Divine Life.

It should seem, that the term 'perfect,' as well in other parts of Scripture as in the writings of St. Paul, not only has not always the exact meaning which we assign to it, but has different meanings, according to the occasion on which it is employed. Sometimes this term expresses the aim rather than the acquisition, as in that injunction of our Saviour—'Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.' Sometimes it appears to imply, being furnished with needful instruction in all points, as in Paul's direction to Timothy,—'that the man of God may

* Romans, ch. vi.

be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' Often it means nearly the same with religious sincerity, as in Proverbs,—'for the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.' Sometimes it is used with a special reference to abhorrence of idolatry, as when the expression 'perfect heart' is applied to various kings of Judah. The meaning in Philippians, 'Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded,' seems to import only real earnestness. Perfection, in the precise notion of it, admits not of gradation, nor of advancement in the same quality.

The highest kind of perfection of which man is capable, is to 'love God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, with all his heart;' that is, so to love as to obey the laws of the one, while he rests on the merits of the other. Paul intimates that our happiness consists in the pardon of our sins, and our holiness in our conquest over them; and perhaps there is not a more dangerous delusion, than to separate the forgiveness from the subjugation: the pardon, indeed, is absolute, the conquest comparative. He places attainable perfection in the obedience of faith, in the labours of charity, in the purity of holiness; proving that to aspire after this perfection, all men, according to their respective advantages, are under equal obligation; and it is not too much to assert, that no one lives up to the dignity of man, who does not habitually aspire to the perfection of a Christian. For to come as near to God, that is, as near to perfection as our nature was intended to approach, is but to answer the end for which we were sent into the world.—And do we not defeat that end, while we are not only contented to live so much below our acknowledged standard, but while we rest satisfied, without even aspiring towards it?

While Paul strenuously endeavours to abate confidence, and beat down presumption he is equally careful, not by lowering the tone of perfection, to foster negligence, or to cherish indolence. He speaks as one who knew that sloth is an enemy, the more dangerous for being insidiously quiet. It saps the principle as effectually, if not as expeditiously, as other vices storm it. It is, indeed, in the power of this one inert sin, to perform the worst work of all the active ones—to destroy the soul. He admonishes us equally, by his writings and by his example, to carry all the liveliness of our feelings, and the vigour of our faculties, into our religion. He knew that a cold indifference, that a lifeless profession, would ill prepare us for that vital world, that real land of the living, that immortality which is all life, and soul, and spirit. He therefore prescribes for us patients who need to be stimulated, full as often as to be lowered, in our moral temperature; nay, whose *general* constitution of mind presents a large portion of languor to be invigorated, and of lethargy to be animated. 'A physician,' says bishop Jeremy Taylor, 'would have small employment on the Riphæan mountains, if he could cure nothing but calentures; dead palsies and consumptions are *their* diseases.

The apostle, however, intimates frequently that perfection does not consist in a higher heroic elevation in some particular point, which, as few could reach, so fewer would aim at it; but in a steady principle, an equable piety, a consistent practice, an unremitting progress. If the standard held up were singular, it would be unprofitable. An exhibition of character rather to be wondered at, than imitated, would be a useless perfection. A prodigy is not a model. It would be no duty to copy a miracle, but presumptuous to expect that a miracle would be wrought for us. To call on *all* to 'perfect holiness in the fear of God'—to exhort men to 'go unto perfection,' would be mocking human infirmity, if the apostle meant something which only a very few could attain.—'Pressing on unto perfection,' can mean little more than a perpetual improvement in piety and virtue.

Let us then be animated and encouraged by Scripture instances of excellence, and not deterred by them, as if they were too sublime for our imitation, as if exalted piety were to be limited to a few peculiar favourites of Heaven, were the exclusive prerogative of some distinguished servants of God, the rare effect of some miraculous gift. All grace is indeed a miracle, but it is not a singular, it is not an exclusive miracle. Whole churches, with exceptions no doubt, have been favoured with it. Saint Paul speaks of large communities, not universally, we presume, but generally, touched by divine grace, so as collectively to become 'the joy and crown of his rejoicing.' Hear him declare of his Roman converts, that they 'were full of all goodness, filled with all knowledge;' of the Corinthians—that they 'were enriched in every thing—that they abounded in all *faith* and *diligence*:' mark the connexion of these two attributes, 'faith' in one, nor in another, is not the slackener of duty, but in *all* the principle and spring of the same 'diligence.' These high commendations are not limited to Apollos, his associate in the ministry, nor to 'Timothy, his dearly beloved son;' nor to Titus, his 'own son after the common faith,' nor to any other of those distinguished saints 'who laboured with him in the Gospel.'

We may therefore fairly consider Saint Paul, not as an instructor nor as a model, exclusively for martyrs, and ministers, and missionaries. As the instruction of Christ's sermon on the mount, though primarily addressed to his disciples, was by no means restricted to them; so the exhortations of Paul are not confined to ecclesiastical teachers, though he had them much in view. The inclosure lies open to all; the entrance is left free; the possibility of salvation is universal, the invitation is as large as the benevolence of God, the persons invited as numerous as his whole rational creation.

It is a beautiful part of his character, and it is what contributes to make him so uniformly a pattern, that all his strength is not reserved for, nor expended entirely on, those great demands which so frequently occurred, to answer which he was always so fully prepared, and which he encountered with such unshaken fortitude.

His intervals were filled up with shades of the same colour: the same principle was set at work in all the common events of his daily life: the same dispositions which were ripening him for his final suffering, operated in the humble, ten-

der, forbearing habits, in which he was perpetually exercised. The Divine principle had resolved itself into a settled frame of mind. And it was in the hourly cultivation of that most amiable branch of it, Christian charity, that he acquired such maturity in the heroic virtue of enduring patience. To deny his own inclination to sustain the infirmities of the weak, to bear the burden of others, he considered, as indispensable in the followers of *Him*, whose lovely characteristic it was, that HE PLEASED NOT HIMSELF. In enjoining this temper on his Roman converts, he winds up his injunction, with ascribing to the Almighty the two attributes which render Him the fountain of grace, for the production of this very temper in all alike who call upon Him for it. He denominates Him *the God of patience and consolation.*

We must not therefore fancy that this eminent saint was not an example to private life, because his destination was higher, and his trials greater than ours. This superiority cannot disqualify him for a copy. We must aim at the highest point. It is easier to reduce a portrait than enlarge it. All *may* have the same grace; and some actually *have* great, if not equal trials. If Christians are not now called like him, to martyrdom, they are frequently called to bear the long protracted sufferings of sickness without mitigation, of penury without relief, of sorrows without redress. Some are called to bear them all, without even the comfort of witnesses, without the soothing of pity.

If the elevation of his conduct does not place this great apostle above our imitation, no more does the sublimity of his principles, as we find them exhibited in his writings. His piety in both is equally of a practical nature. We rise from perusing many a treatise of metaphysical morality, without clearly ascertaining its precise object; at least, without carrying away any one specific principle for the regulation of our own heart and life. We admire the ingenuity of the work, as we admire the contrivance of a labyrinth; it is curiously devised; but its intricacy, while it has amused, has embarrassed us. We feel that we might have made our way, and attained our end, more easily and more speedily, in a plain path, where less perplexity required no artificial clue. The direct morality of our apostle has none of this *Dædalian enginery.*

Saint Paul, in one sense, always writes like a man of the actual world. His is not a religion of theory, but of facts, of feelings, of principles; a religion exactly accommodated to the being for whom he prescribes. Our passions and our reason, our hopes and our fears, our infirmities and our supports, our lapse and our restoration, all find their place in his discussions. He consults every part of our nature; he writes for material and immaterial, for mortal and immortal man.

He does not abound in those desultory and random discussions, which distract the mind, and leave the reader at a loss what he is to think and what he is to do. He does not philosophize upon abstract truths, nor reason upon conjectural notions; but bears witness to what he has seen and known, and deduces practical instruction from actual events. He is therefore distinct in his exposition of doctrines and duties; explicit in his injunctions and reproofs; and this because truth is absolute. We can scarcely peruse a sentence in his writings, without finding something to bring away from them for our own use, something which belongs to ourselves, something which would have been seasonably addressed to us, had he been our personal correspondent.

He knew mankind too well, not to know the necessity of speaking out: he knew, that if any opening was left, they would interpret it in their own favour; that they would slip out of every thing which was not precisely explained and definitely enjoined. He was aware that the reason why men profit so little by scripture instruction is because, in applying it, they are disposed to think only of other people, and are apt to forget themselves. He knew it was not easy to lower the world's good opinion of itself. That the quicksightedness of certain persons, errs, not in misunderstanding the justness of a reproof, but only in mistaking its object; and that, by directing the censure to others, they turn away the point of the weapon from their own bosoms. Yet he makes charitable allowance for the capacities, the exigencies, and the temptations of a world so diversely circumstanced. Like his blessed Master, he would have all men every where to be saved; and, like him, left no means unessayed, which might promote this great end.

We must not imagine that Christianity is not precisely the same thing now, as it was when our Apostle published it, because its external marks are not so completely identified. A more animated zeal in religion might have been visible and legitimate in the first ages of the Church, than commonly in the present. The astonishing change then effected in the minds of men, was rapid, and often instantaneous. In our day, it is usually gradual. It is no wonder that persons should have been overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, at being suddenly rescued from the darkness of Pagan idolatry, at being delivered from the bondage of the Jewish ritual, and translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The total revolution in the mind, and in the principles, would certainly produce a sensible alteration in the external habits and visible practice of the Gentile convert; whose morals, if he were indeed a convert, would be as different from what they had previously been, as his faith; and he as different from his former self, as any two men from each other. This, consequently, would make the change more obvious than in the renovated character of a nominal Christian, now brought to embrace vital Christianity; in whose outward observances, antecedent and subsequent to his change, there might probably be no *very* apparent alteration.

In the days of the apostle, the holy sacrament of baptism was likely to be, in the very highest sense of the word, regeneration. It was not only the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; but it was also, for the most part, an actual evidence that such grace had been effectually received unto eternal salvation. The convert then was an adult, and received baptism as his explicit confession and

open adoption of the new faith. To bring men 'to believe with the heart, and to confess with the tongue,' the Divinity of the Redeemer, was to bring them to be truly converted. 'No man could say that Jesus was the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' As the Apostles had neither reputation to influence, nor authority to compel, nor riches to bribe, so it is obvious that there was nothing to attract men to Christianity, except their full conviction of its divine truth. It was hostile to their secular advancement, to their interests, their reputation, their safety. Hypocrisy was consequently a rare, when it was a losing sin. A hypocrite was not likely to embrace a faith by which he was sure to gain nothing in this world, if it were false; and nothing till after his death, if it were true. Christians were such optionally, or not at all.

It was not then probable, that he who was baptized under such circumstances, would be merely an external convert. According to all human means of judging, that 'faith' existed, which is said by an article to be 'confirmed' in baptism; and this holy Sacrament became not only an initiatory, but a confirmatory rite.

There were at that time no hereditary professors; there was no such thing as Christianity by transmission. There was therefore a broad line to step over, whenever the new faith was adopted. There was no gradual introduction into it by education, no slipping into it by habit, no wearing its badge by fashion.

But if the novelty attending the early introduction to Christianity has ceased; if living in a land where it is universally professed, being educated in some acquaintance with the Christian faith, finding easy access into the Temples in which it is preached, habitually attending on its services, living under laws which are imbued with its spirit; if all this takes off the apparent effect, if it lessens the surprise, if it moderates the joy and wonder, which a total change in external circumstances was calculated to excite; if it even lessens in a degree the *visible* alteration produced in hearts awakened by it; if this change was more obvious in the conversion of those who were before wallowing in the grossest abominations, or sunk in the most degrading superstitions, than in those who are conversant with the decencies of life, who had previously observed the forms of religion, and practised many of the social virtues; yet, in the views and in the feelings, in the heart and in the spirit, in the principle of the mind, and in the motive of the conduct, the change in the one case has a very near affinity to the change in the other. The difference of circumstances diminishes nothing of the real power of Divine grace; it does not alter the nature of the change inwardly effected; it does not manifest now, less than it did then, the pitifulness of God's great mercy in delivering, those who are tied and bound with the chain of their sins.

Had Saint Paul been a profligate or immoral man, we apprehend that his conversion would, as an example have lost much of its power. The two extremes of character might in that case, indeed, more forcibly strike the superficial inquirer. But to show the turpitude of gross vice, a miracle is not necessary; Christianity is not necessary. The thing was self-evident; Antoninus and Epictetus could have shown it. But for a man who had previously such strong claims to respect from others, such pretensions on which to value himself,—his Hebrew descent; his early initiation into the distinguishing Jewish rite; his Pharisaic exactness, an exactness not hypocritical, but conscientious; his unquestionable morals, his blameless righteousness in all that pertained to the law, his correctness of demeanour, his strict observance of religious forms; that *such* a man should need the further subjugation of his passions, his pride, his bigotry, and uncharitableness; that, in short, *he* should require a total and radical renovation of the character and of the soul,—this was indeed a wonder worthy of Divine inspiration to declare, as well as of Divine grace to accomplish; and this change, when really effected, afforded an appeal for the truth of the doctrine, both to the heart and to the understanding, more powerful than volumes of arguments.

Saint Paul was aware, that there is frequently more danger where there is less scandal; that some fancy they are reformed, because they have exchanged the sensual for the spiritual vices; that in truth, men oftener change their sins than their nature, put pride into their correctness, and violence into their zeal, and uncharitableness into their sobriety, and covetousness into their prudence, and censoriousness into their abstinence. Among the better disposed, he knew there were many who, after they are brought to embrace religion, think they have nothing more to do. They were, perhaps, sincere in their inquiries, and their convictions were strong, But having once obtained a confidence in their acceptance, they conclude that all is well. They live upon their capital, if we may be allowed the expression; and so depend upon their assurance, as if their personal work was done. To both of these classes he directs the warning voice, *Go on unto perfection.* To both he virtually represents, that if the transformation were real, it would animate them to increased earnestness; while their desires would be more fervent, their piety would not evaporate in desires, their constant fear of relaxing would quicken their progress.

It is worth remarking, that throughout the Holy Scriptures, and especially throughout the writings of the Apostle—*striving with principalities and power, putting on the whole armour of God, continuing instant in prayer, seeking those things which are above, mortifying your members, avoiding inordinate affections and covetousness, which is idolatry,* are not applied to the profane, or even to the careless, but to those who had made a great proficiency in religion; not to novices, but to saints. These are continually cautioned against sitting down at ease in their religious possessions; they are exhorted, on the contrary, to augment them. It is not, as an able writer says, 'longing after great discoveries, nor after great tastes of the love of God, nor longing to be in Heaven, nor longing to die, that are such distinguishing marks of a perfect Christian, as longing after a more holy heart, and living a more holy life.'*

* Dr. Owen on the Holy Spirit

The apostle shows that we must not sit down satisfied even in the habitual *desire*, even in the general *tendency* to what is right. He frequently stirs up the reader to actual exercise, to quickening exertions: without such movements, he knew that desire might sink into unproductive wishes; that good tendencies might come short of their aim. This brief, but comprehensive hint—*not as though I had already attained*—frequently recollected and acted upon, will serve to keep up in the mind, that we are capable of much higher things than we have yet achieved—and that, while we are diligently ascending by each progressive step, we must still stretch forward our view to the culminating point.

If, then, even the most conspicuous converts of Saint Paul required to be confirmed by incessant admonition; if he did not think the most heroic Christians so established as to be arrived at their ultimate state; if he did not think the most advanced so secure as to be trusted to go alone, so complete in themselves as to lose sight of their dependence; if *they* required to be exhorted *to go on unto perfection; to be renewed from day to day; to stand fast; to quit themselves like men; to be strong in the Lord*, and in the power of his might *to stand against the wiles of the Devil; and having done all, to stand*—'Let us not be high minded, but fear.' If we believe that the Spirit was poured out in more abundant measures in the incipient state, than on us in the more established position of the Church; yet we see their superiority, in this respect, neither lessened the necessity of caution in the instructor, nor of diligence in the hearer.

CHAP. XXI.

On the superior advantages of the present period, for the attainment of Knowledge, Religion, and Happiness.

We have heard of a Royal infidel, who was impious enough to declare, that had the Maker of the universe consulted him at the Creation, he could have given him hints for the improvement of his plan. Many, who do not go so far as to regret that their advice was not asked when the world was made, practically intimate that they could improve upon the scheme of Providence in carrying it on. We have met with persons, who, not fully satisfied with the evidences of Christianity, at least not quite firm in the practical adoption of its truths, have expressed a wish, that for the more complete confirmation of their faith, their lot had been cast in this, or in that particular age, in which they might have cleared up their doubts, and removed their difficulties.

Now, though it is not permitted to indulge any wish contrary to the appointment of Him who fixes the bounds of our habitation, and ordains our whole lot in life; yet it should seem that we, in this age and country, have the most abundant reason, not only to be peculiarly grateful that it has fallen at this precise period. Who, that reflects at all will maintain, that any æra in the history of the world, whether antecedent or subsequent, to the institution of Christianity, could have afforded clearer lights or higher aids than the present? or would have conduced to make us wiser, better, or happier? Let us be assured, that if we do not see truth with sufficient distinctness, it is not our own position, nor that of the object, which is in fault, but the organ itself.

It is not to our present purpose to insist on the internal evidence of Christianity; on that witness within—that conviction of the Christian's own mind, arguing so strongly the truth of Revelation from its correspondence to his own wants—because this is an evidence equally accessible to the believer of every period. We shall, therefore, only offer a few observations on the superior advantages which we at present enjoy, as well from other causes, as from the fulness of the external evidence which has been undeniably established upon the profoundest knowledge and closest examination of the Sacred Records, by so many of our wisest and soundest divines.

We have, for our assistance in religious knowledge, the collective wisdom of sacred antiquity; and for our furtherance in piety, its precepts, its monitions, its examples. It is also the peculiar honour of our apostle, that from his life and writings *alone*, a new confirmation of the truth of the Gospel which he preached, has been recently and completely made out. In addition to the fullest general evidence of the authenticity of the New Testament, two of our own contemporaries—men of different rank, habits, education, and turn of mind,—have extracted from the writings of Saint Paul *exclusively*, particular and collateral evidence of a most interesting and important nature. We refer, in the first instance, to a small but valuable work of a noble author,* himself a convert of no common order, in which he lays down, and substantially proves the truth of his position, that *the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, is, of itself, a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a Divine Revelation.* Into these circumstances, which it is probable powerfully assisted his own convictions, he has with great diligence examined; and has with irresistible strength proposed them for the conviction of others.

In the other instance, we refer to that exquisite work, the 'Horæ Paulinæ,' of Doctor Paley; a work which exhibits a species of evidence as original as it is incontrovertible. It is a corroboration of the truth of the New Testament, derived from the incidental but close correspondence of numberless passages in the life and travels of Saint Paul, related in the Acts, with his own repeated reference, in his Epistles, to the same circumstances, persons, places, and events; together with their most correct geographical agreement;—the respective authors of both writings uniformly and consistently though unintentionally, throwing light on each other.

This interesting work, in a more especial manner, adds weight to facts which were already

* Lord Littleton

fully established, and strength to that 'truth' which was before 'barred up with ribs of iron.' We cannot too highly estimate this subsidiary evidence to the Christian revelation, derived as it were casually and incidentally from our apostle, from him to whom we were already unspeakably indebted for so much direct spiritual and practical instruction. It is a species of evidence so ingenious, yet so solid, so clear and so decisive, that the author must have carried his point in any court of judicature before which the cause might have been brought.

If it were not the very genius of scepticism to shrink its 'shrivelled essence' down to the minutest point, when it wishes to work itself an entrance where no visible opening seems previously to have been left, we should think, that, after the able defences of Revelation which have been made on general grounds, the addition of these partial and subordinate, but not less convincing proofs, had not left even the smallest crevice through which Unbelief could force, or even Doubt insinuate its way.

But to quit this more limited channel of conviction for the broad current of general Scripture, let us examine what period would have been more favourable, not only for the confirmation of our belief, but for our moral, our intellectual and spiritual improvement. Let us institute an inquiry, (if a few cursory and superficial remarks may be so called,) whether all those whose supposed superior opportunities of religious improvement we are disposed to envy, really possessed more advantages than ourselves; and whether many among them were induced, in consequence of their peculiar situation to make the best use of those which they actually did possess.

How very few of those who were not only countrymen, but contemporaries of our blessed Redeemer, believed in him, or at least persevered in their belief! Even of his immediate disciples, even of his select friends, of the favoured few who beheld the beautiful consistency of his daily life, who were more intimately privileged to hear the gracious words which proceeded from his lips: we pass by the Son of Perdition:—one had not courage so much as to acknowledge that he knew him; another doubted his identity after his resurrection. In the moment of exquisite distress, *they all forsook him*. His own 'familiar friends' abandoned him, 'and of the people there was none with him.'

Where then were the peculiar, the enviable advantages, of that situation, placed in which, the fervent Peter, who declared that though all men should forsake him, yet would not he; yet Peter forgot his oath, and forfeited his fidelity! Can we affirm, that we have stronger or more tender religious attachments, than 'the disciple whom Jesus loved?' Yet was he one of that *all* who forsook him. Are we sure that it is a superiority in our faith, rather than in our circumstances, which makes us to differ from those affectionate but troubled companions, who, after his crucifixion, sunk into the most hopeless despondency:—'We *trusted* that this should have been He who should have redeemed Israel.' Cannot we, on the contrary, exultingly say, We *know* that this was He who has redeemed, not Israel only, but every penitent believer, of every people, and kindred, and nation, to the end of the world. After the truth of our Lord's divine mission had been ratified by his resurrection from the dead, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, how many who heard the preaching, and beheld the miracles of his apostles, remained hardened in incredulity! In the ages immediately succeeding the promulgation of the Gospel, even while its verities were new, and the sense of its blessings fresh, many of its professors fell into gross errors; some tainted its purity by infusions of their own; others incorporated with it the corruptions of Paganism. Many became heretics, some became apostates, not a few renounced Christianity, and more perhaps dishonoured it.

Does not Saint Paul, after his incessant labours, even after his apparent success in one quarter of the globe, sorrowfully exclaim to his friend, 'Thou knowest that *all* they which are in Asia be turned away from me.' He then proceeds to enumerate individuals, of whom, it may be presumed, that he once entertained better hopes. While, therefore, we possess the works of this great apostle, and still many continue to receive so little benefit from them, let not any deceive themselves with the notion, that they would have derived infallible sanctification from his personal preaching; but let them remember, that all proconsular Asia,* who enjoyed that blessing, deserted both him and the Gospel. May not even the advantage, considered in some points of view, be reckoned on our side? If we may trust his own humble report of himself, 'his letters,' he says, 'were allowed to be more weighty and powerful than his bodily presence.'

If so many were perverted, who had the privilege of standing the nearest to the fountain of light, who even drank immediately from the living spring itself, shall we look for a more luminous exhibition or more privileged exercise, or more sincere 'obedience' of Christian 'faith,' in the middle ages, when, in truth, religion was in a good measure extinguished; when the Christian world had sunk into almost primeval darkness; 'when Christianity,' to borrow the words of Melancthon, 'was become a mere compound of philosophy and superstition;' when what religion did survive, was confined to a few, was immured in cloisters, was exhausted in quibbles, was wasted in unprofitable subtleties, was exhibited with little speculative clearness, and less practical influence?

Even when literature and religion awoke together from their long slumber, when Christianity was renovated and purified, the glorious beams of the Reformation did not diffuse universal illumination. Even by better disposed, but partially enlightened minds, contention was too frequently mistaken for piety, and debate substituted for devotion.

Of how different a spirit from these wrangling Polemics was Saint Paul! Though he repeatedly exhorts his friends, especially Timothy, in instructing his people, to watch particularly 'over their doctrine,' the grand foundation on

* 2 Timothy, ch. i.

which all preaching must be built, yet he ever shows himself an enemy to controversy, to frivolous disputes, and idle contention. He directs his converts, not to waste the time and strength, which should be reserved for great occasions, *about words to no profit, but subverting the hearers*. And, perhaps, there has seldom been less genuine piety in the church than when intricate and theoretical points in theology have been most pertinaciously discussed. This is not 'contending for the faith once delivered to the saints,' but diverting the attention from faith, and alienating the heart from charity.

We do not mean to censure a spirit of enquiry, nor to repress earnestness, in the solution of difficulties. It is indeed the very essence of an inquiring mind freely to start doubts, as it is of a learned and enlightened age rationally to solve them. On this point we are quite of the opinion of a good old Divine, that 'nothing is so certain as that which is certain after doubts.' But compared even with the latter period of religious light and information, how far superior is our own? We who have the happiness to live in the present age, live, when truth has had time to force its way through all the obscurities which had been raised about it, to prevent its access to the understanding. If we rightly appreciate our advantages, we shall truly find that no country, in any age, was ever placed in a fairer position for improvement in wisdom, in piety, and happiness. A black cloud indeed, charged with sulphureous matter, for a long time was suspended over our heads; but, providentially directed, it passed on, and bursting, spread conflagration over other lands. By the most exact retributive justice, those very countries in which the modern Titans first assaulted Heaven, became the first scene of total desolation.—In other places we have seen experiments tried, new in their nature, terrible in their progress, and worse than fruitless in their results. We have seen a great nation endeavouring to show the world that they could do without God. We have seen them exclude the Maker from his own creation! and to complete the opposition between their own government and His whom they gloried in dethroning, they used their impiously assumed power for the extermination of the species which he had created, for the destruction of the souls whom he had sent his Son to redeem.

If, however, in our own age, and perhaps our own country, Christianity has not only been boldly opposed, but audaciously villified, it has been only so much the more seriously examined, so much the more vigorously defended. If its truth has been questioned by some, and denied by others, it has been only the more carefully sifted, the more satisfactorily cleared. The clouds in which sophistry had sought to envelope it, are dispersed; the charges which scepticism had brought against it are repelled. The facts, arch-like, have been strengthened by being trampled upon. Infidelity has done its worst, and by the energy of its efforts, and the failure of its attempts, has shown how little it could do. Wit, and ingenuity, and argument have contributed each its quota to confirm the truths which wit, and ingenuity, and argument, had undertaken to subvert. Talents on the wrong side have elicited superior talents on the right, and the champions of the Gospel have beaten its assailants with their own weapons. Phyrrhonism has been beneficial, for by propagating its doubts it has caused them to be obviated. Even Atheism itself has not been without its uses, for by obtruding its impieties, it has brought defeat on the objections, and abhorrence on their abettors. Thus the enemies of our faith have done service to our cause, for they have not advanced a single charge against it, which has not been followed by complete refutation; the shaking of the torch has caused it to diffuse a clearer and stronger light.

Let us once more resume the comparison of our advantages, and the use we make of them, with the advantages and the conduct of these ancient servants of God, in considering whom, perhaps, we mingle envy with our admiration. How fervently did these saints of the Old Testament pant for that full blaze of light under which we live, and for which we are so little thankful!—'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!' was the heart-felt apostrophe of a devout patriarch. The aged saint who 'waited for the consolation of Israel, and rapturously sung his *Nunc dimittis*,'—the ancient prophetess, who departed not from the temple, who desisted not from prayer day or night;—the father of the Baptist, who 'blessed the Lord God of Israel that he had visited and redeemed his people;'* —how small were their advantages compared with ours.' How weak is our faith, how freezing our gratitude compared with theirs! † They only beheld in their Saviour a feeble infant;—they had not heard, as we have heard, from the most undeniable authority, the perfections of his life, nor the miracles of his power, nor the works of his mercy, nor his triumph over death, nor his ascension into Heaven, nor the descent of the Comforter. They had witnessed a large portion of the globe brought within the Christian pale by the preaching of that Gospel, the dawn of which so exhilirated their overflowing hearts. If full beatitude is promised to them who have not seen, and yet have believed; what will be the state of those who virtually *have* seen, and yet have not believed?

Had any patriarch, or saint, who was permitted only some rare and transient glimpses of the promised blessing, being allowed in prophetic vision to penetrate through the long vista of ages, which lay in remote futurity before him—had he been asked whether, if his power concurred with his choice, in what age and in what nation he would have wished his lot assigned him—is it not more than probable that he would have replied—IN GREAT BRITAIN, IN THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

May we not venture to assert, that there are, at this moment, on the whole, more helps and fewer hindrances to the operation of Christian piety, than at any preceding period? May we not assert, that at no time has the genuine religion of the Gospel been more precisely defined, more completely stript of human inventions, more purified from philosophical infusions on

* Luke, ch. i. † Luke, ch. ii

one hand, and on the other more cleared from superstitious perversions, fanatical intemperance, and debasing associations? That there still exist among us philosophists and fanatics, not a few, we are far from denying; but neither is the distortion of faith in the one party, nor its subversion in the other, the prevailing character; good sense and right mindedness predominate in our general views of Christianity.

If it be objected that there is a very powerful aid wanting to the confirmation of *our* faith, which the age of the apostles presented—that of miraculous gifts—the obvious answer is, that if they have ceased, it is because they have fully answered the end for which they were conferred, and is not the withdrawing of these extraordinary endowments more than compensated by the fulfilment of so many of the prophecies of the New Testament, and the anticipation of the near approach of others, yet unaccomplished? In the mean time have we not the perpetual attestation of those living miracles, the unaltered state of the Jewish Church, and the frequent internal renovation of the human heart?

There is not a more striking feature in the character of the Royal Psalmist, than the fervent and reiterated expressions of his love and admiration of the Holy Scriptures. In what a variety of rapturous strains does he pour out the overflowings of his ardent soul! 'Oh! how I love thy law! Thy word is a lamp to my feet—Oh teach me thy statutes! Thy words have I hid within my heart—Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law!' To give a full view of his affectionate effusions, would be to transcribe the larger portion of the Psalms. To paraphrase his words, would be to dilute essential spirit.

Let us pause a moment, and while we admire this holy fervency, let us blush at our own ingratitude for advantages so superior: let us lament our own want of spiritual sensibility. Let us be humbled at the reflection, how very small was the portion of Scripture with which David was acquainted! How comparatively little did he know of that divine book, yet what holy transport was kindled by that little! He knew scarcely more than the Pentateuch, and one or two contemporary prophets. Then let us turn our eyes to the full revelation under which we live, and be grateful for the meridian splendour.

Had David seen, as we see, the predictions of the late prophetical writers, those of Isaiah especially, to say nothing of his own, fulfilled—had he seen, as we have seen their glorious accomplishment in the New Testament—the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, the plenary gift of the Holy Spirit, the fulfilment of types, the substantiation of shadows, the solution of figures, the destruction of Jerusalem, the wide propagation of the everlasting Gospel, and that in far more tongues than were heard on the day of Pentecost,—had he seen a Bible in every cottage—a little seminary of Christian institution in every village—had he beheld the firm establishment of the Christian Church, no longer opposed, but supported by secular powers, after having conquered opposition by weapons purely spiritual—had he seen a standing ministry continued in a regular succession from the age of the apostles to the present hour—had he seen, in addition to these *domestic* blessings, England emancipating Africa and evangelizing India, commerce spreading her sails to promote civilization, and Christianity elevating civilization and sanctifying commerce—had the Royal Saint witnessed this combination of mercies in one single country, what had his feelings been?

He who so passionately exclaimed, 'Oh how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! —my soul hath a desire and a longing to enter into the courts of the Lord—blessed are they that dwell in thine house—one day in thy courts is better than a thousand—one thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple' —this conqueror of the heathen, this denouncer of false gods, this chosen monarch of the chosen people, this fervent lover of the devotions of the Sanctuary, this hallowed poet of Sion, this noble contributor to *our* public worship, this man after God's own heart, was not permitted to build one single church—we in this island only, possess ten thousand.

But some may say, the apostles had supernatural supports, which are withheld from us. Their supports were doubtless proportioned to the fervency of their faith, and to the extraordinary emergencies on which they were called to act. But as we had occasion to remark in a former chapter, these assistances seem to have been reserved for occasions to which we are not called; and to be dispensed to them for others rather than for themselves. We do not find that they who could cure diseases, were exempted from suffering them; that they who could raise others from the dead, escaped a violent death themselves. We do not find that the aids afforded them, were given to extinguish their natural feelings, to lighten their burdens, to rescue them from the vicissitudes of a painful life, from poverty or sorrows, from calumny or disgrace. Though Saint Paul converted the jailor, he had nevertheless been his prisoner; though he had been the instrument of making 'saints even in Cæsar's household,' he was not delivered from perishing by Cæsar's sword.

It does not appear that in their ordinary transactions they had the assistance of more than the ordinary operations of the Spirit. These, blessed be Almighty Goodness! are not limited to prophets or apostles, but promised to all sincere believers to the end of the world: communicated in a measure proportioned to their faith, and accommodated to their exigencies. The treasures of grace, unlike all other treasures, are not to be exhausted by using; but like the multiplication of loaves, more is left to be gathered up after the gift is used, than was imparted in the first instance.

CHAP. XXII.

Conclusion.—Cursory inquiry into some of the causes which impeded General Improvement.

If we, in this favourite country, and at this

favoured period, are not as internally happy as we are outwardly prosperous; if we do not reach that elevation in piety; if we do not exhibit that consistency of character, which, from the advantages of our position, might be expected; if innumerable providential distinctions are conferred without being proportionally improved; if we are rejoicing for public blessings, without so profiting by them as to make advancement in private virtue and personal religion;—should we not diligently inquire in what particulars our deficiencies chiefly consist, and what are the obstructions which especially impede our progress?

That middle course which the luke-warm Christian takes, he takes partly because it seems to carry with it many present advantages, which the genuine Christian loses. This measured conduct obtains for him that general popularity, the desire of which is his main spring of action. He secures the friendship of worldly men, because he can accommodate his taste to their conversation, and bend his views to their practices. As he is not profligate, the pious who are naturally candid, judge him favourably, and entertain hopes of his becoming all they wish; so that he unites the credit of their good opinion with the pleasure derived from the society of the others. A neutral character thus converts every thing to his own profit, avoids the suspicion attached to saints, and the disgrace inseparable from sinners. To disoblige the world, is, upon his principles, a price almost too high for the purchase of heaven itself. Is it not doubtful, whether he who accounts it so easy a matter to be a Christian, *is* a Christian in reality? To such an one, indeed, it is as easy as it is pleasant to reckon upon heaven; but can any, without faith and without patience, be followers of them, who, 'through faith and patience inherit the promises?'

The truth is, mere men of the world do not conceive a very formidable opinion of the real evil of sin: they think slightly of it because it is so common; they even think almost favourably, at least they think charitably of it, when they see that even good men are not altogether exempt from it. From carelessness, or an erroneous kindness, they entertain a tender opinion of what they perceive to be a constant attendant on human nature: they plead, in its vindication, the mercy of God, the weakness of man, the power of temptation; and are apt to construe a strict judgment on the thing into an uncharitable harshness on the man. For this forbearance they expect to be paid in kind, to be paid with interest; for their very charity is usurious. The least religious however, often resent keenly those crimes which offend against society; of sins which affect their own interest, they are the most forward to seek legal redress. But they do not feel that some of the worst corruptions are of a spiritual nature; and to those which only offend God, they never show themselves tenderly alive.

But if they were brought to entertain just notions of the glorious majesty of God, they would soon learn to see how sin dishonours it; nor could an adequate view of his unspeakable holiness fail of leading them to a thorough hatred of every thing which is in direct opposition to it. If, however, their own impure vision prevents them from perceiving how deeply sin must offend the infinite purity of God, they might at least be awfully convinced of its malignant nature, by contemplating the wide and lasting ravages it has made among the human race. That can be no inconsiderable evil, which has been perpetuating itself, and entailing misery on its perpetrators for nearly six thousand years.

Many are too much disposed to confound a confident feeling of security with religious peace. Conscience, whose suggestions were perhaps once clamorous, may, from long neglect, have become gradually less and less audible. The more obtuse the feelings grow, the less disturbance they give. This moral deadness assumes the name of tranquillity and, as Galgacus said of the Roman conquerors, in his noble speech on the Grampian hills, 'when they have laid all waste, they call the desolation Peace.'

Is there not a growing appearance, that many are substituting for the integrity of Christian doctrine, as taught in the Gospel, a religion compounded chiefly of the purer elements of Deism, amalgamated with some of the more popular attributes of Christianity! If the apostle, after all his high attainments, 'was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' shall a deteriorated, or, as it is pleased to call itself, a liberal Christianity, lead its votaries to be satisfied with knowing every thing except him; that is, to be satisfied without knowing him in such a manner, as at once to believe in him as a prophet, and to be ruled by him as a king; at once to obey him as a teacher, and trust in him as a Saviour?

On the other hand, let us remember, that we may be correct in our creed without possessing a living faith. We may be right in our opinions, without any cordial concurrence of the heart, or any obedient subjugation of the will. We may be regular in the forms of devotion, and irregular in our passions. We may be temperate in what regards the animal appetites, and intemperate in the indulgence of evil tempers. We may be proud of our own orthodoxy, while we ridicule a serious spirit in another professor of the same opinions. We may maintain a customary habit of prayer, while we are destitute of that spirit, without which prayer is unavailable. May not some pray without invoking the mediation of the great Intercessor? May he not say to some now, as he said to his disciples, *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name?* We do not mean so invoking him, as to round the closing period with his name, but so regarding him, as to make him the general medium of our intercourse with heaven.

And is it not an increasing evil, that there seems to prevail among some, a habit, so to speak, of generalizing religion, of melting down the peculiar principles of Christianity, till its grand truths are blended in the fusion, and come out of the crucible without any distinctive character? A fundamental doctrine of our religion is, with many, grown not only into disuse, but discredit. But unless a man can seriously say, that his natural powers are fully effectual for his practical duties; that he is uniformly able

of himself to pursue the right which he approves, and to avoid the wrong which he condemns, and to surmount the evil which he laments, and to resist the temptations which he feels, it should seem that he ought in reason to be deeply thankful for that divine aid which the Gospel promises, and on which Saint Paul descants with such perpetual emphasis; that he ought gladly to implore its communication by the means prescribed by this great apostle.

If a man does not set up on his own strength; if he cannot live upon his own resources, if he finds that his good intentions are often frustrated, his firmest purposes forgotten, his best resolutions broken; if he feels that he cannot change his own heart; if he believes that there is a real spiritual assistance offered, and that the communication of this aid is promised to fervent prayer; it should seem to follow, as a necessary consequence, that this interior sentiment would lower his opinion of himself, change his notions of the Divine character, diminish his feeling of self-dependence, loosen his attachment to sense, make him more indifferent to human opinion, and more solicitous for the favour of God. This humbling, yet elevating intercourse with heaven, would seem to convince him feelingly, that of himself he can do nothing; that human estimation can confer no intrinsic value, because it cannot make us what we are not; and that we *are*, in reality, only what we are in the sight of God.

There is another cause which hurts the interests of religion. Injurious names are reciprocally given to the most imperious duties; parties take different sides, and match them each against the other as if they were opposite interests. But no power of *words* can alter the nature of *things*. Good works are not Popery; nor is faith Methodism. Yet, is not a spiritual litigation vigorously carried on between two principles, both of which are of the very essence of the Gospel, and bound up therein in the most intimate and indissoluble union? Let us not reject a truth because it is misrepresented by those who do not understand it. We know that a learned bishop was condemned by an ignorant pope, for propagating no worse a heresy than that there were Antipodes.

Many, again, desire to be religious, but suffer the desire to die away without any effort to substantiate it; without any cordial adoption of the means which might produce the effect. Yet, with this inoperative desire, the languid Christian quiets conscience, and is satisfied with referring to this unproductive wish as an evidence of his sincerity. The effect is similar to that of a deceitful anodyne, which lulls pain without removing its cause. There are those who may be said to swallow religion as something which they are told it is their duty to *take*, in order to do them good. They therefore receive it in the lump, and then dismiss it from their thoughts as a thing done. It is no wonder if the success is proportioned to the measure. But would the apostle have so strenuously insisted on the necessity of being, '*renewed from day to day*,' if there were any *definite* day in which it could be affirmed that the work had been accomplished? and can any thing short of such accomplishment, justify us in desisting to press forward after it?

If, then, we would embrace Christianity as a life-giving principle, we must examine it analytically; we must resolve it into the several parts of which it is compounded, instead of considering it as a nostrum the effect of which is to be produced by our ignorance of the ingredients of which it is made up. To subscribe articles of faith, without knowing what consequences they involve—to be satisfied with having them propounded, without entering into the spirit of our obligation to obey them—to acknowledge their truth, without examining our own interest in them, is not only to be an imperfect, but an irrational Christian.

While the political and moral improvement of the world around us seems, in many respects, to be constantaneously advancing, let not *us*, of this highly distinguished land, frustrate the grand objects which we have been the honoured instruments of establishing. Britain presents a spectacle, on which, if the world gazes with an admiring, it will gaze also with a scrutinizing eye. Those whom we have served and saved, will jealously inquire—for the obliged are not the least prying—Whether we live up to the high tone we assume?—Whether we obey the Gospel we extol?—Whether we are religious in person, or by proxy?—Whether all who disperse the Scriptures, read them?—May not the critical observer be inclined to parody the interrogatories of our apostle to the censorious Jews.* Thou that sayest another should not swear, art thou guilty of profane levity? Thou that sayest a man should keep the sixth and seventh commandments, dost thou shrink from duelling and libertinism? Thou, who holdest out a fair example in attending the solemnities of the Sunday morning's worship, dost thou attend likewise the unhallowed festivities of the evening? Thou that art valiant in the field, art thou also 'valiant for the truth?' Thou who, professing 'pure religion and undefiled,' visitest the fatherless and widow with thy purse, dost thou keep thyself 'unspotted from the world?' Let it be observed, that these are hypothetical questions, not rash accusations.

The public munificence and private bounties of this age and country have outgone all example. An almost boundless benevolence has annihilated all distinction of religion and of party, of country and of colour. No difference of opinion, no contrariety of feeling, has checked its astonishing operation, has chilled its ardent flame. No object is too vast for its grasp, none is too minute for its attention. The moral energies of the country have kept pace with the military and political. Charity, too, has been intimately connected with religion; and we may hope, it is to the growth of the latter principle, that we are to ascribe the former practical effect.

It remains with us to give substantial proof, that the right practice has flowed from the true principle. Let us never give occasion to the members of another church to infer, that even Protestants are not practically averse from the purchase of *indulgencies*. Let us not give them

* Roman, xxi. 22.

the slightest cause for imputing to any of our acts of beneficence a spirit of commutation. Let them not see, that sobriety, purity, and self-control, are considered by many of us as minor statutes in the Christian code. Let it not be said, that personal holiness is laid asleep by the soothing blandishments of liberal profession; by the misapplied tenderness of candid construction; by a toleration which justifies the doing much which is not right in ourselves, because we make large allowances for whatever is wrong in others. To judge charitably, is a Christian precept; but religion no more permits us to judge falsely, than to act censurably. To the affluent it is cheaper, and to the inconsiderate it is easier, to relieve others, than to deny ourselves. Let them remember, however, that though to give liberally is nobly right; yet to act consistently is indispensably requisite, if we would make that which is in itself right acceptable to God; and let even the most benevolent never fail to reflect, that nothing *can* swell the tide of charity to its full flow, but self-denial.

If some among us were to make their public bounties the measure of their domestic conduct, it would be setting up for themselves a high practical standard: yet it might be fair to make it so. Such liberal persons might do well to consider how far, in every subscription they pay, they do not give a sort of public pledge of their general practice; and how far, in order to be honest, they are not bound to redeem the deposit by their general correctness. Is it not a species of deceit to appear better than we are? And do we not virtually practice this deceit when our self-government is obviously not of a piece with our liberality?

Do we then undervalue charity? God forbid. Charity is a grace so peculiarly Christian, that it is said to have been practised in those countries only where Revelation has been enjoyed either by possession or tradition. Of the historians of ancient times, who have transmitted to us the fame of their military skill, their political glory, their literary talents, their public spirit, or domestic virtues, none have made any mention of their charitable institutions; none have made any mention of a great nation receiving into its bosom, in the moment of imminent danger, of foreign war, and pressing domestic distress, myriads of exiles from the enemy's country; of their receiving and supporting thousands upon thousands of the priesthood of a religion so hostile to their own, as scarcely to allow them to believe that there was salvation for their benefactors.

Benevolence is the most lovely associate of the other Christian virtues. We mistake only when we adopt her as their substitute. Excellence in this grand article is so far from procuring a dispensation from the other graces of piety, that she only raises the demand for their loftier exercise. In the Christian race, however, the fleeter virtue must not slacken her speed, lest her competitors should be distanced. No; the lagging attributes must quicken theirs.

We trust that we have not, in any part of this little work, attempted to degrade human reason. Is it degrading any quality or faculty, to assign to it its proper place, to ascribe to it its precise value? Reason and religion accord as completely in practice as in principle; and is it not a subject of gratitude to God, that as there is nothing in Christian belief, so there is nothing in Christian practice, but what is consonant to views purely rational. Every disorder, irregularity, and excess, which religion prohibits, is as contrary to our comfort, health, and happiness here, as it is fatal to our eternal interests; and should be equally avoided on the ground of natural and spiritual judgment. Nay, if Christians are accused by the infidel of selfish motives, in obeying God for their own interest; is there not more absurdity in disobeying Him, when, by so doing, we forfeit every thing which a well-directed self-love would show to be our highest advantage, and which common sense, human prudence, worldly wisdom, would teach us to pursue.

Saint Paul combats all those partialities of judgment which arise from the understanding submitting itself to the will, from conviction yielding to inclination. As it was the truth of the principle, the rectitude of the act, which determined his judgment, so we read him to little purpose, if the same qualities do not also determine ours. But men submit to unexamined predilections; they do not allow themselves to be convinced of any thing with which they are not first pleased. Practical errors are rarely adopted from conviction, but almost always from inclination.

Our apostle frequently includes 'lovers of their ownselves' in his catalogue of grievous offenders. He considers selfishness as a state of mind inconsistent with Christianity. No other religion, indeed, had ever shown that it was sinful; no other had ever taught its followers to resist it; no other had furnished arms against it, had enabled its disciples to conquer it. Yet, may we not venture to assert, that among the prominent faults of this our age, is a growing selfishness. We mean not that sullen selfishness which used to display itself in penurious habits, in shabby parsimony, and a sordid frugality, which received part of its punishment in the self-inflicted severities of its votary, and part in the discredit and contempt which attended it. But we mean, that luxurious selfishness which has its own gratification in the vanity it indulges; and its own reward in the envy it secretly awakens, in the admiration it openly excites.

The tide of an increasing dissipation, gorgeous, costly, and voluptuous beyond all precedent, has swept away the mounds and ramparts within which prudence in expense, and sobriety in manners, had heretofore confined it. Strange! that fashion and custom, and the example of others, are brought forward as a vindication by beings, who know they must be themselves individually responsible for the errors and the sins into which they are plunged by imitation, as well as by original evil. *Numbers* are pleaded as a valid apology for being carried headlong down the torrent. But have we ever heard that the plague was thought a slighter distemper from the greatness of the numbers infected? On the contrary, is not the extent of the ravage its most alarming symptom? and is not the weekly diminution in

the numbers publicly registered as the only signal of returning health?

God has blessed the late unparalleled exertions of this country with a proportionate success. Honour and glory crown our land. But honour and glory are not primary stars; they borrow their lustre from that immortal principle which is the fountain of all moral illumination. Let us bear in mind that to be prosperous without piety, or joyful without gratitude, or thankful without repentance, or penitent without amendment, is to forfeit the favour of HIM from whom all prosperity is derived. We are told in the oracles of God, that the corruptions of an irreligious nation converted blessings into sins, when 'pride and abundance of idleness' were the ungrateful returns for 'fulness of broad.'

Though we no longer perceive that open alienation from God, so apparent in the commencement of the French Revolution, yet do we perceive that return to Him which the restoration of our prosperity demands? Has the design of the Almighty, in visiting us with the calamities of a protracted war been answered by a renunciation of the sins for which it was sent? Has his goodness, in putting a happy period to these calamities, been practically acknowledged? acknowledged, not merely by the public recognition of a wisely appointed day, but by a visible reformation of our habits and manners?

We are now most imperatively called upon to give unequivocal proof, that our devotion, in the late twenty years succession of national fasts, had some meaning in it, beyond the bare compliance with authority, beyond the mere impulse of terror. Let it not be inferred, from any apparent slackness of principle, that ours was the prayer of nature for relief, more than of grace for pardon; the cry for escape from danger, rather than for deliverance from sin.

As God has abundantly granted us all the temporal blessings for which we then solicited, let us give full proof that our petitions were spiritual as well as political; as He, in pity, has withdrawn the anger of his chastisements, let us, in gratitude, take away the provocation, of our offences. He has long tried us with correction, he is now trying us with mercies. If, as we are told, when his judgments are abroad in the earth, we should learn righteousness, what should we *not* learn, what should we *not* practice, when blessings are accumulated upon us—blessings, more multiplied in their number, more ample in their extent, more valuable in their nature, more fraught with present advantages, more calculated for our eternal good, than ever were experienced by our ancestors in any period of our history?

Let us not triumphantly compare ourselves with worse nations, unless we know what use they would have made of mercies which we have neglected; let us not glory in our superiority to countries who have had to plead a bad government, and a worse religion. To be better than those who are bad, is a low superiority now, and will not be admitted as a reason for our acquittal hereafter. Corrupt Tyre, profligate Zidon, whose extinction the prophet Ezekiel had predicted in the most portentous menaces, were pronounced by *Infinite Compassion* to be far less criminal than the *instructed* people to whom the pathetic admonition was addressed. If blindness and ignorance might be offered as a plea for those heathen cities, what should extenuate the guilt of the enlightened regions of Galilee.

It was on the most solemn of all occasions that of a description of the general resurrection, that St. Paul breaks in on his own awful discussion, to suggest the 'corruption of manners' inseparable from 'evil communications.' Does it not give an alarming idea of his serious view of the subject, that he should so intimately connect it with the immmediate concerns of the eternal world? Can we safely separate a cause and a consequence which he has so indissolubly joined?

As the joy felt by the patriarchal family in the ark, when the bird of peace, with its symbol in her mouth, returned to this little remnant of an annihilated world; such, in its kind was the joy experienced when the voice of the charmer was recently heard on our shores, and throughout an almost desolated quarter of the globe. But let not our own country forget that this peace, so fervently desired, and so graciously accorded, may, by our neglecting to improve the blessing, become more fatally and irretrievably injurious, than that state of hostility which we have so long and so justly deplored. Let us not forget, that shutting the gates of the temple of Janus, by opening those of Paris, may only have changed the nature, while it has deteriorated the character, of the warfare.

What incantation is there in the name of Peace, that could, as by the touch of a magician's wand, produce, at once, a total revolution in the character of a people, and in our opinion of them? What charm is there in a *sound* that could so transform a great nation, abandoned for a quarter of a century to boundless vice, and avowed infidelity, as to render familiar intercourse with them profitable, or their society even safe; which could instantaneously convert this scene of alarm, into a scene of irresistible attraction; could cause, at once, this land of terror to be desired as impatiently, and sought as impetuously, as if it had been the Land of Promise?

Will the borrowed glory, or rather the stolen renown, arising from pilfered pictures, or plundered statues; will the splendour of public buildings, buildings cemented with the blood of millions; will all the works of art, however exquisite, atone for the degradation of the human, and it may be almost said the extinction of the Christian character? Will marbles, and paintings, and edifices, expiate the utter contempt of morality, and all the other still lingering effects of the legal abolition of Christianity and the public disavowal of God? Will the flower of England, the promising sons and blooming daughters of our nobles and our gentry reap a measure of improvement from these exhibitions of genius, which may be likely to compensate for the pernicious associations with which they may be accompanied?

Have we forgotten, that the mother of the fine arts, licentious Greece, injured Rome in her vital interests, her character, her honour, and her principles, more irretrievably, than all her losses

during her military conflict with them had done? that this great people, the England of antiquity, never lost sight of her grandeur, never sacrificed her superiority, but when she stooped to imitate the vices, to adopt the manners, and to import the philosophy of the vanquished enemy; and, in short, that Greece amply revenged herself on her conqueror by a contact, which communicated an inextinguishable moral contagion.

To revert to a remoter, and a higher source; did not the chosen people of God suffer more essentially in their most important interests, by their familiar communications, after their conquest, with the polluted Canaanites, than in their long and perilous warfare with them?

Let not these necessary inquiries be construed into the language of vulgar prejudice, into the unchristian wish to perpetuate an unjustifiable aversion to a nation, because they have been our political enemies. We feel no desire, like the Carthagenian father, to entail our own hatred on our offspring, to make our posterity vow interminable hostility to a people, because their predecessors have suffered by them. We have no wish to persist in personal alienation from any country, especially from one which Divine Providence has made our nearest neighbour.—God forbid!

But may we not venture, with all diffidence, to ask, should there not be a little space allowed them, after their deep pollution, to perform that quarantine, which even our ships are obliged to undergo, before we receive them on our own shores? May we not further ask, in the present instance, if by plunging into the infection on theirs, we do not fearfully aggravate the peril of the pestilence?

In these observations we are conscious of wandering into illimitable topics—topics which may appear irrelevant to our general object. It is fit we should resume that object, and draw to a close.

Let us observe, for our own imitation, that what Saint Paul might be called to do, or to suffer, in the intermediate stages to his final rest, he knew not, nor was he solicitous to know. Of one thing he was assured, that a day was coming, when, whatever now appeared mysterious, would be made clear.—While others only knew *Him* of whom they had *heard*, he knew *Him* in whom he *believed*. He desired no other ground of confidence. All those superior concerns, on which his heart was set, lay beyond the grave; lay in the hands of Him to whom he had trusted all which he accounted valuable. The soul which he had committed to his Saviour, he knew that this Saviour 'was able to preserve against that day.' Swallowed up in the grandeur of the thought, he disregards the common forms of speech, and leaves it to his friend to supply what was rather understood than expressed—*what day he meant*.

If it is astonishing that any should disbelieve a religion, which has such unparalleled attestations to its truth, as the religion which Saint Paul preached, is it not far more astonishing that, professing not to have any doubt of its truth, any should continue to live as if they believed it to be false; that any should live without habitual reference *to that day*, to which his writings so repeatedly point, without labouring after a practical conviction of that paramount doctrine on which he so unwearedly descants, the benefits of the death of Christ?

This doctrine our apostle has, beyond all other writers, irrefragably proved to be the only argument of real efficacy against our own fear of death. All the reasonings of philosophy, all the motives drawn from natural religion, all the self-complacent retrospection of our own virtues, afford no substantial support against it. This great doctrine, as the apostle also repeatedly proves, supplies the only principles which can set us above the sorrows of life. Mere morality often raises us above the grosser corruptions of sense, but it does not raise us above the entanglements of the world; it does not lift us above perplexing fears and anxious solicitudes; it does not raise us above the agitations of desire; it does not rescue us from the doubts and harassings of an unsettled mind; it does not deliver us from the pangs of an awakened conscience. A mere moral taste may sustain character and support credit, but it does not produce present holiness, nor peace, nor a hope full of immortality. It neither communicates strength to obey, nor power to resist, nor a heart to love, nor a will to serve.

Let us then study with holy Paul, that Gospel wherein the true secret of happiness, as well as the great mystery of godliness, is revealed. Our Divine Teacher does not say *read*, but *search* the Scriptures. Its doctrines are of everlasting interest. All the great objects of history lose their value, as through the lapse of time they recede farther from us; but those of the book of God are commensurate with the immortality of our nature. All existing circumstances, as they relate to this world merely, lose their importance as they lose their novelty; they even melt in air as they pass before us.

While we are discussing events they cease to be; while we are criticising customs they become obsolete; while we are adopting fashions they vanish; while we are condemning or defending parties, they change sides. While we are contemplating feuds, opposing factions, or deploring revolutions, they are extinct. Of created things, mutability is their character at the best, brevity their duration at the longest. But 'the word of the Lord endureth for ever.' All that the heart craves, that word supplies. *This* state of things is all instability; the Gospel points 'to' a city which hath foundations.' *Here* we have, beyond any other age or people, seen the kingdoms of this world transferred, depopulated, destroyed: *there* we are promised a kingdom which cannot be moved.

With Holy Paul then let us take the Bible for the subject of our meditation, for the ground of our prayer, the rule of our conduct, the anchor of our hope, the standard of our faith. Let us seriously examine whether this faith is built on the same eternal basis with that of the apostle, whose character we have been contemplating, whether we are endeavouring to erect upon it a superstructure of practical goodness worthy of the broad and sure foundation?

Let us close our frequent reference to Saint Paul as a pattern for general imitation, by re-

peating one question illustrative of those opposite qualities which ought to meet in every Christian. If the most zealous advocate of *spiritual influences* were to select, from all the writers of sacred antiquity, the most distinguished champion of his great cause, on whom would he fix his choice? And if the most strenuous asserter of the duty of *personal activity in moral virtue* were to choose from all mankind the man who most completely exemplified this character in himself, where must he search? Would not the two antagonists, when they meet in the field of controversy, each in defence of his favourite tenet, find that they had fixed on the same man,—Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles? If then we propose him as our model, let us not rest till something of the same combination be formed in ourselves.

To this end let us diligently study his epistles, in which the great doctrines of Salvation are amply unfolded, and the mode of its attainment completely detailed. In contemplating the works of this great master of the human mind, we more than perceive, we *feel* their applicableness to all times, places, circumstances, and persons: and this, not only because the Word of Eternal Life is always the same; but because the human heart, which that word reveals to itself, is still the same also. We behold, as in a mirror, the fidelity, we had almost said the identity, of his representation,—face answering to face. We feel that we are personally interested in every feature he delineates. He lets us into the secrets of our own bosoms. He discloses to us the motives of our own conduct. He touches the true springs of right and wrong, lays bare the moral quality of actions, brings every object to the true point of comparison with each other, and all to the genuine standard of the unerring Gospel. By him we are clearly taught that the same deed done from the desire of pleasing God, or the desire of popular favour, becomes as different in the eye of religion, as any two actions in the eye of men.

There we shall see also, that Saint Paul evinced the sincerity of his eternal hopes by constantly preparing himself for their fruition. These hopes shaped his conduct, and moulded his spirit to a resemblance of the state he hoped for: and he best proved his belief that there really was such a state by labouring to acquire the dispositions which might qualify him for its enjoyment. Without this aim, without this effort, without this perseverance, his faith would have been fruitless, his hope delusive, his profession hypocrisy, and his 'preaching vain.'

Let us image to ourselves the Saviour of the world, holding up professing Christians as a living exemplification of his religion; of that religion which he taught by his doctrines, and ratified by his blood. Let us represent him to our imagination as referring to the lives of his followers for the truth of his word. Do we not tremble at such a responsibility? Do we not shrink from such a comparison? Are we not alarmed at the bare idea of bringing reproach on his Gospel, or dishonour on his name?

Christians! why would you wait till you arrive at heaven, before you contribute to the great end of every dispensation,—namely, *that God may be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe*? Even now, something of that assimilation should be taking place, which will be perfected when 'we shall see Him as He is,' and which will never take place if the resemblance begin not here. Beatification is only the finishing of the likeness. Intuition will only complete the transformation.

CŒLEBS IN SEARCH OF A WIFE.

COMPREHENDING

OBSERVATIONS ON DOMESTIC HABITS AND MANNERS, RELIGION AND MORALS.

For not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure and subtle, but to know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom.—*Milton.*

PREFACE.

When I quitted home on a little excursion in the spring of this present year, 1808, a thought struck me, which I began to put into immediate execution. I determined to commit to paper any little circumstance that might arise, and any conversations in which I might be engaged, when the subject was at all important, though there might be nothing particularly new or interesting in the discussion thereof.

I fulfilled my intention as occasions arose to furnish me with materials, and on my return to the north, in the autumn of this same year, it was my amusement on my journey to look over and arrange these papers.

As soon as I arrived at my native place, I lent my manuscript to a confidential friend, as the shortest way of imparting to him whatever had occurred to me during our separation, together with my reflections on those occurrences. I took care to keep his expectations low, by apprizing him, that in a tour from my own house in Westmoreland, to the house of a friend in Hampshire,

he must not look for adventures, but content himself with the every day details of common life, diversified only by the different habits and tempers of the persons with whom I had conversed.

He brought back my manuscript in a few days, with an earnest wish that I would consent to its publication; assuring me that he was of opinion it might not be altogether useless, not only to young men engaged in the same pursuit with myself, but to the general reader. He obviated all objections arising from my want of leisure, during my present interesting engagements, by offering to undertake the whole business himself, and to release me from any further trouble, as he was just setting out for London, where he proposed passing more time than the printing would require.

Thus I am driven to the stale apology for publishing what perhaps it would have been more prudent to have withheld—*the importunity of friends*; an apology so commonly unfounded, and so repeatedly alleged, from the days of John Faustus to the publication of Cœlebs.

But whether my friend or my vanity had the largest share of influence, I am willing to indulge the hope that a better motive than either friendship or vanity was an operating ingredient in my consent. Be that as it may, I sent him my copy, "*with all its imperfections on its head.*" It was accompanied by a letter, of which the following extract shall conclude these short prefatory remarks:

"I here send you my manuscript, with permission to make what use of it you please. By publishing it I fear you will draw on me the particular censure of two classes of critics. The novel reader will reject it as dull. The religious may throw it aside as frivolous. The one will accuse it of excessive strictness; the other of censurable levity. Readers of the former description must be satisfied with the following brief and general answer—

"Had it been my leading object to have indulged in details that have amusement only for their end, it might not have been difficult to have produced a work more acceptable to the tastes accustomed to be gratified with such compositions. But to entertain that description of readers makes no part of my design.

"The persons with whom I have associated in my excursion, were, principally, though not exclusively, the family of a country gentleman, and a few of his friends—a narrow field, and unproductive of much variety! The generality of these characters move in the quiet and regular course of domestic life. I found them placed in no difficult situations. It was a scene rather favourable to reflection than description. Social intercourse, and not striking events, marked the daily progress of my visit. I had little of pathetic scenes or trying circumstances to work on my own feelings, or, by the relation of them, to work on the feelings of others. My friend's house resembled the reign of some pacific sovereigns. It was the pleasantest to live in, but its annals were not the most splendid to record. The periods which make life happy, do not always render history brilliant.

"Great passions, therefore, and great trials growing out of them, as I did not witness, I have not attempted to delineate. Love itself appears in these pages, not as an ungovernable impulse, but as a sentiment arising out of qualities calculated to inspire attachment in persons under the dominion of reason and religion, brought together by the ordinary course of occurrences, in a private family party.

"The familiar conversations of this little society comprehend a considerable portion of this slender work. The texture of the narrative is so slight, that it barely serves for a ground into which to weave the sentiments and observations which it was designed to introduce.

"It may not be unnecessary to anticipate an objection to which these conversations may sometimes be thought liable. In a few instances, the speeches may be charged with a degree of stiffness, and with a length not altogether consistent with familiar dialogue. I must apologize for this by observing, that when the subjects were serious, the dialogue would not, in every instance, bend to such facilities, nor break into such small parcels, as may easily be effected in the discussion of topics of gayer intercourse.

"But it is time to meet the objections of the more pious reader, if any such should condescend to peruse this little performance. If it be objected, that religious characters have been too industriously brought forward, and their faults somewhat too severely treated, let it be remembered, that while it is one of the principal objects of the work to animadvert on those very faults, it has never been done with the insidious design of depreciating the religion, but with the view, by exposing the fault, to correct the practice. Grossly vicious characters have seldom come in my way, but I had frequent occasion to observe the different shapes and shades of error in various descriptions of society, not only in those worldly persons who do not quite leave religion out of their scheme, but on the mistakes and inconsistencies of better characters, and even on the errors of some who would be astonished not to find themselves reckoned altogether religious. I have not so much animadverted on the unavoidable faults and frailties inseparable from humanity, even in the best characters, and which the best characters most sensibly feel, and most feelingly deplore, as on those errors which are often tolerated, justified, and in some instances systematized.

"If I have been altogether deceived in the ambitious hope that these pages may not be entirely useless; if I have failed in my endeavours to show how religion may be brought to mix with the concerns of ordinary life, without impairing its activity, lessening it cheerfulness, or diminishing its usefulness; if I have erred in fancying that material defects exist in fashionable education; if I have been wrong in supposing that females of the higher class may combine more domestic knowledge with more intellectual acquirement, that they may be at the same time more knowing and more useful, than has always been thought necessary or compatible; in short, if I shall be

found to have totally disappointed you, my friend, in your too sanguine opinion that some little benefit might arise from the publication, I shall rest satisfied with a low and negative merit. I must be contented with the humble hope that no part of these volumes will be found injurious to the important interests, which it was rather in my wish than in my ability to advance; that where I failed in effecting good, little evil has been done: that if my book has answered no valuable purpose, it has at least, not added to the number of those publications, which, by impairing the virtue, have diminished the happiness of mankind: that if I possessed not talents to promote the cause of Christian morals, I possessed an abhorrence of those principles which lead to their contamination.

"CŒLEBS."

CŒLEBS.

CHAP. I.

I HAVE been sometimes surprised, w en in conversation I have been expressing my admiration of the character of Eve in her state of innocence, as drawn from our immortal poet, to hear objections stated by those, from whom, of all critics, I should have least expected it—the ladies. I confess that, as the Sophia of Rousseau had her young imagination captivated by the character of Fenelon's Telemachus, so I early became enamoured of that of Milton's Eve. I never formed an idea *of* conjugal happiness, but my mind involuntarily adverted to the graces of that finished picture.

The ladies, in order to justify their censure, assert that Milton, a harsh domestic tyrant, must needs be a very inadequate judge, and, of course, a very unfair delineator of female accomplishments. These fair cavillers draw their inference from premises, from which I have always been accustomed to deduce a directly contrary conclusion. They insist that it is highly derogatory from the dignity of the sex, that the poet should affirm that it is the perfection of the character of a wife,

> "To study household good,
> And good works in her husband to promote."

Now according to my notion of 'household good,' which does not include one idea of drudgery or servility, but which involves a large and comprehensive scheme of excellence, I will venture to affirm, that let a woman know what she may, yet if she knows not this, she is ignorant of the most indispensable, the most appropriate branch of female knowledge. Without it, however, she may inspire admiration abroad, she will never excite esteem, nor of course durable affection at home, and will bring neither credit nor comfort to her ill-starred partner.

The domestic arrangements of such a woman as filled the capacious mind of the poet, resembles, if I may say it without profaneness, those of Providence, whose under-agent she was. Her wisdom is seen in its effect. Indeed it is rather felt than seen. It is sensibly acknowledged in the peace, the happiness, the virtue of the component parts; in the order, regularity and beauty of the whole system, of which she is the moving spring. The perfection of her character, as the divine poet intimates, does not arise from a prominent quality, or a showy talent, or a brilliant accomplishment; but it is the beautiful combination and result of them all. Her excellences consist not so much in acts as in habits, in

> Those thousand decencies which daily flow
> From all her words and actions.

A description more calculated than any I ever met with to convey an idea of the purest conduct resulting from the best principles. It gives an image of that tranquillity, smoothness, and quiet beauty, which is of the very essence of perfection in a wife; while the happily chosen verb *flow* takes away any impression of dulness, or stagnant torpor, which the *still* idea might otherwise suggest.

But the offence taken by the ladies against this uncourtly bard, is chiefly occasioned by his having presumed to intimate that conjugal obedience

> Is woman's highest honour and her praise.

This is so nice a point, that I, as a bachelor, dare only just hint, that on this delicate question the poet has not gone an inch farther than the apostle. Nay Paul is still more uncivilly explicit than Milton. If, however, I could hope to bring over to my side critics, who, being of the party, are too apt to prejudge the cause, I would point out to them, that the supposed harshness of the observation is quite done away by the recollection that this scruple 'obedience' is so far from implying degradation, that it is connected with the injunction to the woman 'to promote good works' in her husband; an injunction surely inferring a degree of influence that raises her condition, and restores her to all the dignity of equality; it makes her not only the associate, but the inspirer of his virtues.

But to return to the economical part of the character of Eve. And here she exhibits a consummate specimen and beautiful model of domestic skill and elegance. How exquisitely conceived is her reception and entertainment of Raphael! How modest, and yet how dignified! I am afraid I know some husbands who would have had to encounter very ungracious looks, not to say words, if they had brought home even an angel, *unexpectedly* to dinner. Not so our general mother.

> 'Her despatchful looks.'
> Her hospitable thoughts,——intent
> What choice to choose for delicacy best,

all indicate not only the 'prompt,' but the cheerful 'obedience.' Though her repast consisted only of the fruits of paradise

Whatever earth, all bearing mother, yields;

Yet of these, with a liberal hospitality,

She gathered tribute large, and on the board,
Heaps with unsparing hand.

The finest modern lady need not disdain the arrangement of her table, which was

So contrived as not to mix
Tastes not well join'd, inelegant, but bring
Taste after taste, upheld by kindliest change.

It must, however, I fear, be conceded, by the way, that this 'taste *after* taste' rather holds out an encouragement to second courses.

When this unmatched tric had finished their repast, which, let it be observed, before they tasted, Adam acknowledged that

These bounties from our Nourisher are given,
From whom all perfect good descends,

Milton with great liberality to that sex, against which he is accused of so much severity, obligingly permitted Eve to sit much longer after dinner than most modern husbands would allow. She had attentively listened to all the historical and moral subjects so divinely discussed between the first Angel and the first Man; and perhaps there can scarcely be found a more beautiful trait of a delicately attentive wife, than she exhibits by withdrawing at the exact point of propriety. She does not retire in consequence of any look or gesture, any broad sign of impatience, much less any command or intimation of her husband; but with the ever watchful eye of vigilant affection and deep humility:

When by his countenance he seemed
Entering on thoughts abstruse,

instructed only by her own quick intuition of what was right and delicate, she withdrew. And here again how admirably does the poet sustain her intellectual dignity, softened by a most tender stroke of conjugal affection.

Yet went she not, as not with such discourse
Delighted, or not capable her ear
Of what was high—such pleasures she reserved,
Adam relating, she sole auditress——

On perusing, however, the *tete-a-tete*, which her absence occasioned, methinks I hear some sprightly lady, fresh from the Royal Institution, express her wonder why Eve should be banished by her husband from Raphael's fine lecture on astronomy, which follows: was not she as capable as Adam of understanding all he said, of

Cycle and Epicycle, Orb on Orb!

If, however, the imaginary fair objector will take the trouble to read to the end of the eighth book of this immortal work, it will raise in her estimation both the poet and the heroine, when she contemplates the just propriety of her being absent before Adam enters on the account of the formation, beauty, and attractions of his wife, and of his own love and admiration. She will farther observe, in her progress through this divine poem, that the author is so far from making Eve a mere domestic drudge, an unpolished housewife, that he pays an invariable attention even to external elegance in his whole delineation, ascribing grace to her steps, and dignity to her gesture. He uniformly keeps up the same combination of intellectual worth and polished manners;

For softness she, and sweet attractive grace,

And her husband, so far from a churlish insensibility to her perfections, politely calls her

Daughter of God and man, *accomplished* Eve.

I will not, however, affirm that Adam, or even Milton, annexed to the term *accomplished* precisely the idea with which it is associated in the mind of a true modern-bred lady.

If it be objected to the poet's gallantry, that he remarks,

How beauty is excelled by manly grace,
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair;

let it be remembered, that the observation proceeds from the lips of Eve herself, and thus adds to her other graces, the crowning grace of humility.

But it is high time I should proceed from my criticism to myself. The connection, and of course the transition, will be found more natural than may appear, till developed by my slight narrative.

CHAP. II.

I am a young man, not quite four and twenty, of an ancient and respectable family, and considerable estate in one of the northern counties. Soon after I had completed my studies in the University of Edinburgh, my father fell into a lingering illness. I attended him with an assiduity which was richly rewarded by the lessons of wisdom, and the example of piety which I daily received from him. After languishing about a year, I lost him, and in him the most affectionate father, the most enlightened companion, and the most Christian friend.

The grief of my mother was so poignant, so lasting, that I could never prevail on myself to leave her even for the sake of attaining those advantages, and enjoying those pleasures, which may be reaped by a wider range of observation, by a more extended survey of the multifarious tastes, habits, pursuits, and characters of general society. I felt with Mr. Gray, that we can never have but one mother, and postponed from time to time the moment of leaving home.

I was her only child, and thought it was now her sole remaining wish to see me happily married, yet I was desirous of first putting myself in a situation which might afford me a more extensive field of inquiry, before I ventured to take so irretrievable a step, a step which might perhaps affect my happiness in both worlds. But time did not hang heavy on my hands; if I had little society, I had many books. My father had left me a copious library, and I had learnt from

him to select whatever was most valuable in that best species of literature, which tends to form the principles, the understanding, the taste, and the character. My father had passed the early part of his life in the gay and busy world; and our domestic society in the country had been occasionally enlivened by visits from some of his London friends, men of some sense and learning, and some of them men of piety.

My mother, when she was in tolerable spirits, was now frequently describing the kind of woman, whom she wished me to marry. 'I am so firmly persuaded, Charles,' would she kindly say, 'of the justness of your taste, and the rectitude of your principles, that I am not much afraid of your being misled by the captivating exterior of any woman who is greatly deficient either in sense or conduct; but remember, my son, that there are many women against whose characters there lies nothing very ojectionable, who are yet little calculated to taste, or to communicate rational happiness. Do not indulge romantic ideas of super-human excellence. Remember that the fairest creature is a fallen creature. Yet let not your standard be low. If it be absurd to expect perfection, it is not unreasonable to expect *consistency*. Do not suffer yourself to be caught by a shining quality, till you know it is not counteracted by the opposite defect. Be not taken in by strictness in one point, till you are assured there is no laxity in others. In character, as in architecture, proportion is beauty. The education of the present race of females is not very favourable to domestic happiness. For my own part, I call education, not that which smothers a woman with accomplishments, but that which tends to consolidate a firm and regular system of character; that which tends to form a friend, a companion, and a wife. I call education, not that which is made up of the shreds and patches of useless arts, but that which inculcates principles, polishes taste, regulates temper, cultivates reason, subdues the passions, directs the feelings, habituates the reflection, trains to self-denial, and, more especially, that which refers all actions, feelings, sentiments, tastes, and passions, to the love and fear of God.'

I as yet had little opportunity of contrasting the charms of my native place with the less wild and romantic beauties of the south. I was passionately fond of the scenery that surrounded me, which had never yet lost that power of pleasing, which it is commonly imagined that novelty can alone confer.

The Priory, a handsome Gothic mansion, stands in the middle of a park, not extensive, but beautifully varied. Behind are lofty mountains, the feet of which are covered with wood that descends almost to the house. On one side a narrow cultivated valley winds among the mountains; the bright variegated tints of its meadows and corn fields, with here and there a little white cottage, embosomed in trees, are finely contrasted with the awful and impassable fells which contain it.

An inconsiderable but impetuous river rushes from the mountains above, through this unadorned but enchanting little valley, and passes through the Park at the distance of about a hundred yards from the house. The ground falls beautifully down to it; and on the other side is a fine wood of birch over-hanging the river, which is here crossed by a small rustic bridge; after being enlarged by many streams from the neighbouring hills, it runs about half a mile to the lake below, which, from the front of the house, is seen in full beauty. It is a noble expanse of water. The mountains that surround it are some of them covered with wood, some skirted with cultivation, some rocky and barren to the water's edge; while the rugged summits of them all present every variety of fantastic outline. Towards the head of the lake a neat little village ornaments the banks, and wonderfully harmonizes with the simple beauty of the scene. At an opening among the hills, a view is caught of the distant country, a wide vale richly wooded, adorned every where with towns, villages, and gentlemen's houses, and backed by sublime mountains, rivalling in height, though not in their broken and Alpine forms, those that more immediately surround us.

While I was thus dividing my time between the enjoyment of this exquisite scenery, my books, the care of my affairs, my filial attention, and my religious duties, I was suddenly deprived of my inestimable mother. She died the death of the righteous.

Addison has finely touched on the singular sort of delicate and refined tenderness of a father for a daughter: but I am persuaded that there is no affection of the human heart more exquisitely pure, than that which is felt by a grateful son towards a mother, who fostered his infancy with fondness, watched over his childhood with anxiety, and his youth with an interest compounded of all that is tender, wise, and pious.

My retirement was now become solitude; the former is, I believe, the best state for the mind of man, the latter almost the worst. In complete solitude the eye wants objects, the heart wants attachments, the understanding wants reciprocation. The character loses its tenderness when it has nothing to love, its firmness when it has none to strengthen it, its sweetness when it has nothing to soothe it, its patience when it meets no contradiction, its humility when it is surrounded by dependants, and its delicacy in the conversation of the uninformed. Where the intercourse is very unequal, society is somewhat worse than solitude.

I had naturally a keen relish for domestic happiness: and this propensity had been cherished by what I had seen and enjoyed in my father's family. Home was the scene in which my imagination had pictured the only delights worthy of a rational, feeling, intellectual, immortal man;

> Sole bliss of Paradise
> Which has surviv'd the fall.

This inclination had been much increased by my father's turn of conversation. He often said to me, 'I know your domestic propensities; and I know, therefore; that the whole colour of your future life will be, in a particular manner, determined by the turn of mind of the woman you may marry.—Were you to live in the busy haunts of men; were you of any profession, or

likely to be engaged in public life, though I would still counsel you to be equally careful in your choice, yet your happiness would not so immediately, so exclusively depend on the individual society of a woman, as that of a retired country gentleman must do. A man of sense, who loves home, and lives at home, requires a wife who can and will be at half the expense of mind necessary for keeping up the cheerful, animated, elegant intercourse which forms so great a part of the bond of union between intellectual and well bred persons. Had your mother been a woman of an uninformed, inelegant mind, virtuous and pious as she is, what abatement must there have been in the blessings of my lot! The *exhibiting*, the *displaying* wife may entertain your company, but it is only the informed, the refined, the cultivated woman who can entertain yourself; and I presume whenever you marry you will marry primarily for yourself, and not for your friends; you will want a *companion*: an *artist* you may hire.

'But remember, Charles, that when I am insisting so much on mental delicacy, I am assuming that all is right in still more essential points. Do not be contented with this superstructure, till you have ascertained the solidity of the foundation. The ornaments which decorate do not support the edifice! Guarded as you are by Christian principles, and confirmed in virtuous habits, I trust you may safely look abroad in the world. Do not, however, irrevocably dispose of your affections till you have made the long promised visit to my earliest, wisest, and best friend, Mr. Stanley. I am far from desiring that your friend should direct your choice. It is what even your father would not do: but he will be the most faithful and most disinterested of counsellors.'

I resolved now for a few months to leave the Priory, the seat of my ancestors, to make a tour not only to London, but to Stanley Grove, in Hampshire, the residence of my father's friend; a visit I was about to make with him just before his last illness. He wished me to go alone, but I could not prevail on myself to desert his sick bed for any scheme of amusement.

I began to long earnestly for the pleasures of conversation, pleasures which, in our small, but social and select circle of cultivated friends, I had been accustomed to enjoy. I am aware that certain fine town-bred men would ridicule the bare mention of learned and polished conversation at a village in Westmoreland, or indeed at any place out of the precincts of the metropolis; just as a London physician, or lawyer, smiles supercilliously at the suggested merits of a professional brother, in a provincial town. Good sense, however, is of all countries, and even knowledge is not altogether a mere local advantage. These, and not the topics of the hour, furnish the best raw materials for working up an improving intercourse.

It must be confessed, however, as I have since found, that to give a terseness and a polish to conversation; for rubbing out prejudices; for correcting egotism; for keeping self-importance out of sight, if not curing it; for bringing a man to condense what he has to say, if he intends to be listened to; for accustoming him to endure opposition; for teaching him not to think every man who differs from him in matters of taste, a fool, and in politics, a knave; for cutting down harangues; for guarding him from producing as novelties and invention what has been said a thousand times; for quickness of allusion, which brings the idea before you without detail or quotation; nothing is equal to the miscellaneous society of London.—The advantages too which it possesses, in being the seat of the court, the parliament, and the courts of law, as well as the common centre of arts and talents of every kind, all these raise it above every other scene of intellectual improvement, or colloquial pleasure, perhaps in the whole world.

But this was only the secondary motive of my intended migration. I connected with it the hope, that in a more extended survey, I might be more likely to select a deserving companion for life. 'In such a companion,' said I, as I drove along in my post-chaise, 'I do not want a Helen, a Saint Cecilia, or a Madame Dacier; yet she must be elegant, or I should not love her; sensible, or I should not respect her; prudent, or I could not confide in her; well informed, or she could not educate my children; well bred, or she could not entertain my friends; *consistent*, or I should offend the shade of my mother; pious, or I should not be happy with her, because the prime comfort in a companion for life is the delightful hope that she will be a companion for eternity.

After this soliloquy, I was frightened to reflect that so much was requisite; and yet when I began to consider in which article I could make any abatement, I was willing to persuade myself that my requisitions were moderate.

CHAP. III.

I had occasionally visited two or three families in our county, who were said to make a very genteel appearance on narrow fortunes. As I was known not to consider money as a principal consideration, it had often been intimated to me what excellent wives the daughters of these families would make, because on a very slender allowance their appearance was as elegant as that of women of ten times their expectations. I translated this respectable appearance into a language not the most favourable, as I instantly inferred, and afterwards was convinced, that this personal figure was made by the sacrifice of their whole time to those decorations which procured them credit, by putting their outward figure on a par with the most affluent. If a girl with a thousand pounds rivals in her dress one with ten thousand, is it not obvious, that not only all her time must be employed, but all her money devoted to this one object? Nothing but the clippings and parings from her personal adornments could enable her to supply the demands of charity; and these sacrifices, it is evident she is not disposed to make.

Another inducement suggested to me was, that these young ladies would make better wives,

because they had never been corrupted by the expensive pleasures of London, and had not been spoilt by the gay scenes of dissipation which it afforded. This argument would have weighed powerfully with me, had I not observed that they never abstained from any amusement in the country that came within their reach.

I naturally inferred, that she who eagerly grasped at every petty provincial dissipation, would with increased alacrity have plunged into the more alluring gaieties of the metropolis, had it been in her power. I thought she had even less apology to plead than the town lady; the fault was equal, while the temptation was less; and she who was as dissipated as her limited bounds permitted, where there was little to attract, would, I feared, be as dissipated as she possibly could be, when her temptations were multiplied, and her facilities increased.

I had met with several young ladies of a higher description, daughters of our country gentlemen, a class which furnishes a number of valuable and elegant women. Some of these, whom I knew, seemed unexceptionable in manner and mind. They had seen something of the world, without having been spoilt by it; had read with advantage; and acquitted themselves well in the duties which they had been called to practise. But I was withheld from cultivating that degree of intimacy which would have enabled me to take an exact measure of their minds, by the injunction of my father, that I would never attach myself to any woman till I had seen and consulted Mr. Stanley. This direction, which, like all his wishes was a law to me, operated as a sort of sedative in the slight intercourse I had had with ladies; and resolving to postpone all such intimacy as might have led to attachment, I did not allow myself to come near enough to feel with interest, or to judge with decision.

As soon as I got to town, I visited some of my father's friends. I was kindly received for his sake, and at their houses soon enlarged the sphere of my acquaintance. I was concerned to remark that two or three gentlemen, whom I had observed to be very regular in their attendance on public worship in the country, seldom went to church in London; in the afternoon never. 'Religion,' they said, by way of apology, 'was entirely a thing of example, it was of great political importance; society was held together by the restraints it imposed on the lower orders. When they were in the country it was highly proper that their tenants and workmen should have the benefit of their example, but in London the case was different. When there were so many churches, no one knew whether you went or not, and where no scandal was given, no harm was done. As this was a logic which had not found its way into my father's religion, I was not convinced by it. I remember Mr. Burke, speaking of the English, who were so humane at home, and whom he unjustly accused of wanting humanity in India, says, 'that the humanity of Britain is a humanity of points and parallels.' Surely the religion of the gentlemen in question is not a less geographical distinction.

This error, I conceive, arises from religion being too much considered as an institution of decorum, of convention, of society; and not as an institution founded on the condition of human nature, a covenant of mercy for repairing the evils which sin has produced. It springs from the want of a conviction that Christianity is an individual as well as general concern; that religion is a personal thing, previous to its being a matter of example; that a man is not infallibly saved or lost as a portion of any family, or any church, or any community; but that, as he is individually responsible, he must be individually brought to a deep and humbling sense of his own personal wants, without taking any refuge in the piety he may see around him, of which he will have no benefit if he be no partaker.

I regretted, even for inferior reasons, the little distinction which was paid to this sacred day. To say nothing of the elevating views which the soul acquires from devoting itself to its proper object; the man of business, methinks, should rejoice in its return; the politician should welcome its appearance, not only as a rest from anxiety and labour, but as an occasion of cooling and quieting the mind, of softening its irritation, of allaying its ferment, and thus restoring the repaired faculties of invigorated spirits to the demands of the succeeding week, in a frame of increased aptitude for meeting its difficulties and encountering its duties.

The first person whom I visited was a good natured, friendly man, whom I had occasionally seen in the north. As I had no reason to believe that he was religious in the true sense of the word, I had no intention of looking for a wife in his family. I, however, thought it not amiss to associate a little with persons of different descriptions, that by a wider range I might learn to correct my general judgment, as well as to guide my particular pursuit. Nothing, it is true, would tempt me to select a woman on whose pious disposition I could not form a reasonable dependance; yet to come at the reality of those dispositions was no easy matter.

I had heard my father remark, that he had, more than once, known a right-minded girl, who seemed to have been first taught of heaven, and afterwards supported in her Christian course, under almost every human disadvantage; who boldly, but meekly, maintained her own principles, under all the hourly temptations and opposition of a worldly and irreligious family, and who had given the best evidences of her piety towards God, by her patient forbearance towards her erring friends. Such women had made admirable wives when they were afterwards transplanted into families where their virtues were understood, and their piety cherished. While, on the other hand, he had known others, who accustomed from childhood to the sober habits of family religion, under pious but injudicious parents, had fallen in mechanically with the domestic practices, without having ever been instructed in Christian principles, or having ever manifested any religious tendencies. The implantation of a new principle never having been inculcated, the religious habit has degenerated into a mere form, the parents acting as if they thought that religion must come by nature or

infection in a religious family. The girls having never had their own hearts impressed, nor their own characters distinctly considered nor individually cultivated, but being taken out as a portion from the mass, have afterwards taken the cast and colour of any society into which they have happened to be thrown; and they who had lived religiously with the religious, have afterwards assimilated with the gay and dissipated, when thus thrown into their company, as cordially as if they had never been habituated to better things.

At dinner there appeared two pretty looking young ladies, daughters of my friend, who had been sometime a widower. I placed myself between them, for the purpose of prying a little into their minds, while the rest of the company were conversing on indifferent subjects. Having formerly heard this gentleman's deceased wife extolled as the mirror of managers, and the arrangements of his table highly commended, I was surprised to see it so ill appointed, and every thing wearing marks of palpable inelegance. Though no epicure, I could not forbear observing that many of the dishes were out of season, ill chosen, and ill dressed.

While I was puzzling my head for a solution, I recollected that I had lately read in a most respectable periodical work, a paper (composed, I believe, however, by a raw recruit of that well disciplined corps) which insisted that nothing tended to make the ladies so useless and inefficient in the *menage* as the study of the dead languages. I jumped to the conclusion, and was in an instant persuaded that my young hostesses must not only be perfect mistresses of Latin, but the *tout ensemble* was so ill arranged as to induce me to give them credit for Greek also.

Finding, therefore, that my appetite was baulked, I took comfort in the certainty that my understanding would be well regaled; and after secretly regretting that learning should so effectually destroy usefulness, I was resolved to derive intellectual comfort from this too classical repast. Turning suddenly to the eldest lady, I asked her at once if she did not think Virgil the finest poet in the world. She blushed, and thus confirmed me in the opinion that her modesty was equal to her erudition. I repeated my question with a little circumlocution. She stared, and said she had never heard of the person I mentioned, but that she had read Tears of Sensibility, and Rosa Matilda, and Sympathy of Souls, and Too Civil by Half, and the Sorrows of Werter, and the Stranger, and the Orphan of Snowden.

'Yes, Sir,' joined in the younger sister, who did not rise to so high a pitch of literature, 'and we have read Perfidy Punished, and Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy, and the Fortunate Footman, and the Illustrious Chambermaid.' I blushed and stared in my turn; and here the conversation, through the difficulty of our being intelligible to each other, dropped; and I am persuaded that I sunk much lower in their esteem for not being acquainted with their favourite authors, than they did in mine for never having heard of Virgil.

I arose from the table with a full conviction that it is very possible for a woman to be totally ignorant of the ordinary but indispensable duties of common life, without knowing one word of Latin; and that her being a bad companion is no infallible proof of her being a good economist.

I am afraid the poor father saw something of my disappointment in my countenance, for when we were alone in the evening, he observed that a heavy addition to his other causes of regret for the loss of his wife, was her excellent management of his family. I found afterwards that though she had brought him a great fortune, she had a very low education. Her father, a coarse country Squire, to whom the pleasures of the table were the only pleasures for which he had any relish, had no other ambition for his daughter but that she should be the most famous housewife in the country. He gloried in her culinary perfections, which he understood; of the deficiencies of her mind he had not the least perception. Money and good eating, he owned, were the only things in life, which had a real intrinsic value; the value of all other things, he declared, existed in the imagination only.

The poor lady, when she became a mother, and was brought out into the world, felt keenly the deficiencies of her own education. The dread of Scylla, as is usual, wrecked her on Charybdis. Her first resolution, as soon as she had daughters, was that they should *learn every thing*. All the masters who teach things of little intrinsic use were extravagantly paid for supernumerary attendance; and as no one in the family was capable of judging of their improvements, their progress was but slow. Though they were taught much they learnt but little, even of these unnecessary things; and of things necessary they learnt nothing. The well-intentioned mother was not aware that her daughter's education was almost as much calculated to gratify the senses, though in a different way, and with more apparent refinement, as her own had been; and that *mind* is left nearly as much out of the question in making an ordinary artist as in making a good cook.

CHAP. IV.

From my fondness for conversation, my imagination had been early fired with Dr. Johnson's remark that there is no pleasure on earth comparable to the *fine full flow of London talk*. I, who, since I had quitted college, had seldom had my mind refreshed, but with the petty rills and penurious streams of knowledge which country society afforded, now expected to meet it in a strong and rapid current, fertilizing wherever it flowed, producing in abundance the rich fruits of argument, and the gay flowers of rhetoric. I look for an uninterrupted course of profit and delight. I flattered myself that every dinner would add to my stock of images; that every debate would clear up some difficulty, every discussion elucidate some truth; that every allusion would be purely classical, every

sentence abound with instruction, and every period be pointed with wit.

On the tiptoe of expectation I went to dine with Sir John Belfield, in Cavendish-square. I looked at my watch fifty times. I thought it would never be six o'clock. I did not care to show my country-breeding, by going too early to incommode my friend, nor my town-breeding, by going too late and spoiling his dinner. Sir John is a valuable, elegant minded man, and, next to Mr. Stanley, stood highest in my father's esteem for his mental accomplishments and correct morals. As I knew he was remarkable for assembling at his table men of sense, taste, and learning, my expectations of pleasure were very high. 'Here at least,' said I, as I heard the name of one clever man announced after another, 'here, at least, I cannot fail to find.

The feast of reason and the flow of soul:

Here at least all the energies of my mind will be brought into exercise. From this society I shall carry away documents for the improvement of my taste; I shall treasure up hints to enrich my understanding, and collect aphorisms for the conduct of life.'

At first there was no fair opportunity to introduce any conversation beyond the topics of the day, and to those, it must be confessed, this eventful period gives a new and powerful interest. I should have been much pleased to have had my country politics rectified, and any prejudices, which I might have contracted, removed, or softened, could the discussion have been carried on without the frequent interruption of the youngest man in the company. This gentleman broke in on every remark, by descanting successively on the merits of the various dishes; and if it be true that experience only can determine the judgment, he gave proof of that best right to peremptory decision, by not trusting to delusive theory, but by actually eating of every dish at table.

His animadversions were uttered with the gravity of a German philosopher, and the science of a French cook. If any of his opinions happened to be controverted, he quoted, in confirmation of his own judgment, *l' Almanac des Gourmands*, which he assured us was the most valuable work that had appeared in France since the Revolution.—The author of this book he seemed to consider of as high authority in the science of eating, as Coke or Hale in that of jurisprudence, or Quintilian in the art of criticism. To the credit of the company, however, be it spoken, he had the whole of this topic to himself. The rest of the party were, in general of quite a different caliber, and as little acquainted with his favourite author, as he probably was with theirs.'

The lady of the house was perfectly amiable and well bred. Her dinner was excellent; and every thing about her had an air of elegance and splendour: of course she completely escaped the disgrace of being thought a scholar, but not the suspicion of having a very good taste. I longed for the removal of the cloth, and was eagerly anticipating the pleasure and improvement which awaited me.

As soon as the servants were beginning to withdraw, we got into a sort of attitude of conversation; all except the eulogist of l'Almanac des Gourmands, who, wrapping himself up in the comfortable consciousness of his own superior judgment, and a little piqued that he had found neither support nor opposition, (the next best thing to a profound talker,) he seemed to have a perfect indifference to all topics except that on which he has shown so much eloquence, with so little effect.

The last tray was now carried out, the last lingering servant had retired. I was beginning to listen with all my powers of attention to an ingenious gentleman who was about to give an interesting account of Egypt, where he had spent a year, and from whence he was lately returned. He was just got to the catacombs,

When on a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,

the mahogany folding doors, and in at once, struggling who should be first, rushed half a dozen children, lovely, fresh, gay, and noisy. This sudden and violent irruption of the pretty barbarians necessarily caused a total interruption of conversation. The sprightly creatures ran round the table to choose where they would sit. At length this great difficulty of courts and cabinets, *the choice of places*, was settled. The little things were jostled in between the ladies, who all contended who should get possession of the *little beauties*. One was in raptures with the rosy cheeks of a sweet little girl she held in her lap. A second exclaimed aloud at the beautiful lace with which the frock of another was trimmed, and which she was sure mamma had given her for being good. A profitable, and doubtless a lasting and inseparable association, was thus formed in the child's mind between lace and goodness. A third cried out, 'Look at the pretty angel!—do but observe—her bracelets are as blue as her eyes. Did you ever see a match?' 'Surely, lady Bedfield,' cried a fourth, 'you carried the eyes to the shop, or there must have been a shade of difference.' I myself, who am passionately fond of children, eyed the sweet little rebels with complacency, notwithstanding the unseasonableness of their interruption.

At last, when they were all disposed of, I resumed my inquiries about the resting place of the mummies. But the grand dispute, who should have oranges, and who should have almonds and raisins, soon raised such a clamour that it was impossible to hear my Egyptian friend. This great contest was, however, at length settled, and I was returning to the antiquities of Memphis, when the important point, who should have red wine, and who should have white, who should have half a glass, and who a whole one, set us again in an uproar. Sir John was visibly uneasy, and commanded silence. During this interval of peace, I gave up the catacombs, and took refuge in the pyramids. But I had no sooner proposed my question about the serpent said to be found in one of them, than the son and heir, a fine little fellow, just six years old, reaching out his arm to dart an apple across the table at his sister, roguishly intending to overset her glass, unluckily over-

threw his own, brimful of port wine. The whole contents were discharged on the elegant drapery of a white robed nymph.

All was now agitation and distress, and disturbance and confusion; the gentlemen ringing for napkins, the ladies assisting the dripping fair one; each vying with the other who should recommend the most approved specific of getting out the stain of red wine, and comforting the sufferer by stories of similar misfortunes. The poor little culprit was dismissed, and all difficulties and disasters seemed at last surmounted. But you cannot heat up again an interest which has been so often cooled. The thread of conversation had been so frequently broken, that I despaired of seeing it tied together again. I sorrowfully gave up catacombs, pyramids, and serpents, and was obliged to content myself with a little desultory chat with my next neighbour; sorry and disappointed to glean only a few scattered ears, where I had expected so abundant a harvest; and the day from which I had promised myself so much benefit and delight, passed away with a very slender acquisition of either.

CHAP. V.

I went almost immediately after, at the invitation of Mr. Ranby, to pass a few days at his villa at Hampstead. Mr. and Mrs. Ranby were esteemed pious persons, but having risen to great affluence by a sudden turn of fortune in a commercial engagement, they had a little self-sufficiency, and not a little disposition to ascribe an undue importance to wealth. This I should have thought more pardonable under their circumstances, had I not expected that religion would in this respect have more than supplied the deficiencies of education. Their religion, however, consisted almost exclusively in a disproportionate zeal for a very few doctrines. And though they were far from being immoral in their own practice, yet, in their discourse, they affected to undervalue morality.

This was, indeed, more particularly the case with the lady, whose chief object of discourse seemed to be, to convince me of her great superiority to her husband in polemical skill. Her chaste conversation certainly was not coupled with fear. In one respect she was the very reverse of those Pharisees who were scrupulously exact about their petty observances. Mrs. Ranby was, on the contrary, anxious about a very few important particulars, and exonerated herself from the necessity of all inferior attentions. She was strongly attached to one or two preachers, and discovered little candour for all others, or for those who attended them. Nay, she somewhat doubted of the soundness of the faith of her friends and acquaintance, who would not incur great inconvenience to attend one or other of her favourites.

Mrs. Ranby's table was 'more than hospitably good.' There was not the least suspicion of Latin here. The eulogist of female ignorance might have dined in comfortable security against the intrusion and vanity of erudition. She had three daughters, not unpleasing young women. But I was much concerned to observe, that they were not only dressed to the very extremity of the fashion, but their drapery was as transparent, as short, and as scanty; there was as sedulous a disclosure of their persons, and as great a redundancy of ornaments, as I had seen in the gayest circles.

'Expect not perfection,' said my good mother, 'but look for *consistency*.' This principle my parents had not only taught me in the closet, but had illustrated by their deportment in the family and in the world. They observed a uniform correctness in their general demeanor. They were not over anxious about character for its own sake, but they were tenderly vigilant not to bring any reproach on the Christian name by imprudence, negligence, or inconsistency, even in small things. 'Custom,' said my mother, 'can never alter the immutable nature of right; fashion can never justify any practice which is improper in itself; and to dress indecently is as great an offence against purity and modesty, when it is the fashion, as when it is obsolete. There should be a line of demarcation somewhere. In the article of dress and appearance, Christian mothers should make a stand. They should not be so unreasonable as to expect that a young girl will of herself have courage to oppose the united temptations of fashion without, and the secret prevalence of corruption within; and authority should be called in where admonition fails.'

The conversation after dinner took a religious turn. Mrs. Ranby was not unacquainted with the subject, and expressed herself with energy on many serious points. I could have been glad, however, to have seen her views a little more practical, and her spirit a little less censorious. I saw she took the lead in debate, and that Mr. Ranby submitted to act as subaltern; but whether his meekness was the effect of piety or fear, I could not at that time determine. She protested vehemently against all dissipation, in which I cordially joined her, though I hope with something less intemperance of manner, and less acrimony against those who pursued it. I began, however, to lose sight of the errors of the daughters' dress in the pleasure I felt at conversing with so pious a mother of a family. For pious she really was, though her piety was a little debased by coarseness, and not a little disfigured by asperity.

I was sorry to observe that the young ladies not only took no part in the conversation, but that they did not even seem to know what was going on; and I must confess the *manner* in which it was conducted was not calculated to make the subject interesting. The girls sat jogging and whispering each other, and got away as fast as they could.

As soon as they were withdrawn—'There, sir,' said the mother, 'are three girls who will make excellent wives.—They never were at a ball or a play in their lives; and yet, though I say it, who should not say it, they are as highly accomplished as any ladies at St. James's.' I cordially approved the former part of her assertion, and bowed in silence to the latter.

I took this opportunity of inquiring what had been her mode of religious instruction for her

daughters; but though I put the question with much caution and deference, she looked displeased, and said that she did not think it necessary to do a great deal in that way; all these things must come from above; it was not human endeavours, but divine grace which made Christians. I observed, that the truth appeared to be, that divine grace *blessing* human endeavours, seemed most likely to accomplish that great end. She replied, that experience was not on my side, for that the children of religious parents were not always religious. I allowed that it was too true. I knew she drew her instances from two or three of her own friends, who, while they discovered much earnestness about their own spiritual interests, had almost totally neglected the religious cultivation of their children; the daughters in particular had been suffered to follow their own devices, and to waste their days in company of their own choosing, and in the most frivolous manner. 'What do ye more than others?' is an interrogation which this negligence has frequently suggested. Nay, professing serious piety, if ye do not more than those who profess it not, ye do less.

I took the liberty to remark, that though there was no such thing as hereditary holiness, no entail of goodness; yet the Almighty had promised in the scriptures many blessings to the offspring of the righteous. He never meant, however, that religion was to be transferred arbitrarily like an heir-loom; but the promise was accompanied with conditions and injunctions. The directions were express and frequent, to inculcate early and late the great truths of religion; nay, it was enforced with all the minuteness of detail, 'precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little'—at all times and seasons, 'walking by the way, and sitting in the house.' I hazarded the assertion, that it would *generally* be found that where the children of pious parents turned out ill, there had been some mistake, some neglect, or some fault on the part of the parents; that they had not used the right methods. I observed that I thought it did not at all derogate from the sovereignty of the Almighty, that he appointed certain means to accomplish certain ends; and that the adopting these in conformity to his appointment, and dependence on his blessing, seemed to be one of the cases in which we should prove our faith by our obedience.

I found I had gone too far—she said, with some warmth, that she was not wanting in any duty to her daughters; she set them a good example, and she prayed daily for their conversion. I highly commended her for both, but risked the observation, 'that praying without instilling principles, might be as inefficacious as instruction without prayer. That it was like a husbandman, who should expect that praying for sunshine, should produce a crop of corn in a field where not one grain had been sown. God, indeed, *could* effect this, but he does not do it; and the means being of his own appointment, his omnipotence is not less exerted, by his directing certain effects to follow certain causes, than it would by any arbitrary act.' As it was evident that she did not choose to quarrel with me, she contented herself with saying coldly, that she perceived I was a *legalist*, and had but a low view of divine things.

At tea I found the young ladies took no more interest in the conversation than they had done at dinner, but sat whispering and laughing, and netting white silk gloves, till they were summoned to the harpsichord. Despairing of getting on with them in company, I proposed a walk in the garden. I now found them as willing to talk, as destitute of any thing to say. Their conversation was vivid and frivolous. They laid great stress on small things. They seemed to have no shades in their understanding, but used the strongest terms for the commonest occasions, and admiration was excited by things hardly worthy to command attention. They were extremely glad and extremely sorry, on subjects not calculated to excite affections of any kind. They were animated about trifles, and indifferent on things of importance. They were, I must confess, frank and good-natured; but it was evident, that as they were too open, to have any thing to conceal, so they were too uninformed to have any thing to produce; and I was resolved not to risk my happiness with a woman who could not contribute her full share towards spending a wet winter cheerfully in the country.

The next day, all the hours from breakfast to dinner were devoted to the harp. I had the vanity to think that this sacrifice of time was made in compliment to me, as I had professed to like music; till I found that all their mornings were spent in the same manner; and the only fruit of their education, which seemed to be used to any purpose, was, that after their family devotions in the evening, they sung and played a hymn. This was almost the only sign they gave of intellectual or spiritual life. They attended morning prayers, if they were dressed before the bell rang. One morning when they did not appear till late, they were reproved by their father; Mrs. Ranby said, 'she should be more angry with them for their irregularity, were it not that Mr. Ranby obstinately persisted in reading a printed form, which she was persuaded could not do any body much good.' The poor man, who was really well disposed, very properly defended himself, by saying, that he hoped his own heart went along with every word he read; and as to his family, he thought it much more beneficial for them to join in an excellent composition of a judicious divine, than to attend to any such crude rhapsody as he should be able to produce, whose education had not qualified him to lead the devotions of others. I had never heard him venture to make use of his understanding before; and I continued to find it much better than I had at first given him credit for. The lady observed, with some asperity, that where there were *gifts* and *graces*, it superseded the necessity of learning.

In vindication of my own good breeding, I should observe that, in my little debates with Mrs. Ranby, to which I am always challenged by her, I never lost sight of that becoming example of the son of Cato, who, when about to deliver sentiments which might be thought too assuming in so young a man, introduced his admonitions with this modest preface,

Remember what our *father* oft has taught us.

I, without quoting the son of the sage of Utica, constantly adduced the paternal authority for opinions, which might savour too much of arrogance without such a sanction.

I observed in the course of my visit, that self-denial made no part of Mrs. Ranby's religious plan. She fancied, I believe, that it savoured of works, and of works she was evidently afraid. She talked as if activity were useless, and exertion unnecessary, and as if, like inanimate matter, we had nothing to do but to sit still and be shone upon.

I assured her that though I depended on the mercy of God, through the merits of his Son, for salvation, as entirely as she could do, yet I thought that Almighty grace, so far from setting aside diligent exertion, was the principle which promoted it. That salvation is in no part of scripture represented as attainable by the indolent Christian, if I might couple such contradictory terms. That I had been often awfully struck with the plain declarations, 'that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence'—'strive to enter in at the strait gate'—'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might'—'give diligence to make your calling sure'—'work out your own salvation.'—To this labour, this watchfulness, this sedulity of endeavour, the crown of life is expressly promised, and salvation is not less the free gift of God, because he has annexed certain conditions to our obtaining it.

The more I argued, the more I found my reputation decline; yet to argue she compelled me. I really believed she was sincere, but she was ill-informed, governed by feelings and impulses, rather than by the plain express rule of scripture. It was not that she did not read scripture, but she interpreted it in her own way; built opinions on insulated texts; did not compare scripture with scripture, except as it concurred to strengthen her bias. She considered with a disproportionate fondness, those passages which supported her preconceived opinions, instead of being uniformly governed by the general tenor and spirit of the sacred page. She had far less reverence for the preceptive than for the doctrinal parts, because she did not sufficiently consider faith as an operative influential principle; nor did she conceive that the sublimest doctrines involve deep practical consequences. She did not consider the government of the tongue, nor the command of her passions, as forming any material part of the Christian character. Her zeal was fiery, because her temper was so; and her charity was cold, because it was an expensive propensity to keep warm. Among the perfections of the Redeemer's character, she did not consider his being 'meek and lowly' as an example, the influence of which was to extend to her. She considered it indeed as *admirable*, but not as *imitable*; a distinction she was very apt to make in all her practical dissertations, and in her interpretation of scripture.

In the evening Mrs. Ranby was lamenting, in general and rather customary terms, her own exceeding sinfulness. Mr. Ranby said, 'You accuse yourself rather too heavily, my dear; 'you have sins, to be sure.' 'And pray what sins have I, Mr. Ranby?' said she, turning upon him with so much quickness that the poor man started. 'Nay,' said he, meekly; 'I did not mean to offend you; so far from it, that hearing you condemn yourself so grievously, I intended to comfort you, and to say that, except a few faults———' 'And pray what faults?' interrupted she, continuing to speak however, lest he should catch an interval to tell them. 'I defy you, Mr. Ranby, to produce one.' 'My dear,' replied he, 'as you charged yourself with all, I thought it would be letting you off cheaply by naming only two or three, such as———.' Here, fearing matters would go too far, I interposed, and softening things as much as I could for the lady, said, 'I conceived that Mr. Ranby meant, that though she partook of the general corruption———' Here Ranby interrupting me with more spirit than I thought he possessed, said, 'General corruption, Sir, must be a source of particular corruption. I did not mean that my wife was worse than other women.' 'Worse, Mr. Ranby, worse?' cried she. Ranby for the first time in his life, not minding her, went on, 'As she is always insisting that the whole species is corrupt, she cannot help allowing that she herself has not quite escaped the infection. Now, to be a sinner in the gross, and a saint in the detail; that is, to have all sins and no faults, is a thing I do not quite comprehend.'

After he had left the room, which he did as the shortest way of allaying the storm, she apologized for him, and said, 'he was a well meaning man, and acted up to the little light he had;' but added, 'that he was unacquainted with religious feelings, and knew little of the nature of conversion.'

Mrs. Ranby, I found, seems to consider Christianity, as a kind of free-masonry, and therefore thinks it superfluous to speak on serious subjects to any but the initiated. If they do not *return the sign*, she gives them up as blind and dead.—She thinks she can only make herself intelligible to those to whom certain peculiar phrases are familiar; and though her friends may be correct, devout, and both doctrinally and practically pious, yet if they cannot catch a certain mystic meaning, if there is not a sympathy of intelligence between her and them, if they do not fully conceive of impressions, and cannot respond to mysterious communications, she holds them unworthy of intercourse with her. She does not so much insist on high moral excellence as the criterion of their worth, as on their own account of their internal feelings.

She holds very cheap that gradual growth in piety which is in reality no less the effect of divine grace, than those instantaneous conversions which she believes to be so common. She cannot be persuaded that, of every advance in piety, of every improvement in virtue, of every illumination of the understanding, of every amendment in the heart, of every ratification of the will, the Spirit of God is no less the author, because it is progressive, than if it were sudden. It is true, Omnipotence can, when he pleases, still produce these instantaneous effects, as he has sometimes done; but as it is not his established or common mode of operation, it seems

vain and rash, presumptuously to wait for these miraculous interferences. An implicit dependence, however, on such interferences is certainly more gratifying to the genius of enthusiasm, than the anxious vigilance, the fervent prayer, the daily struggle, the sometimes scarcely perceptible, though constant progress of the soberminded Christian. Such a Christian is fully aware that his heart requires as much watching in the more advanced as in the earliest stages of his religious course. He is cheerful in a well-grounded hope, and looks not for ecstacies, till that hope be swallowed up in fruition. Thankful if he feel in his heart a growing love of God, and an increasing submission to his will, though he is unconscious of visions, and unacquainted with any revelation but that which God has made in his word. He remembers, and he derives consolation from the remembrance, that his Saviour, in his most gracious and soothing invitation to the 'heavy laden,' has mercifully promised 'rest,' but he has no where promised rapture.

CHAP. VI.

But to return to Mrs. Ranby's daughters. Is this *consistency*, said I to myself, when I compared the inanity of the life with the seriousness of the discourse; and contrasted the vacant way in which the day was spent, with the decent and devout manner, in which it was begun and ended? I recollected that under the early though imperfect sacred institution, the fire of the morning and evening sacrifice was never suffered to be extinguished during the day.

Though Mrs. Ranby would have thought it a little heathenish to have had her daughters instructed in polite literature, and to have filled a leisure hour in reading to her a useful book, that was not professedly religious, she felt no compunction at their waste of time, or the trifling pursuits in which the day was suffered to spend itself. The pianoforte, when they were weary of the harp, copying some different drawings, gilding a set of flower pots, and netting white gloves and veils, seemed to fill up the whole business of these immortal beings, of these Christians, for whom it had been solemnly engaged that they should manfully fight under Christ's banner.

On a further acquaintance, I was much more inclined to lay the blame on their education than their dispositions. I found them not only good humoured, but charitably disposed; but their charities were small and casual, often ill applied, and always without a plan. They knew nothing of the state, character, or wants of the neighbouring poor; and it had never been pointed out to them that the instruction of the young and ignorant made any part of the duty of the rich towards them.

When I once ventured to drop a hint on this subject to Mrs. Ranby, she drily said there were many other ways of doing good to the poor, besides exposing her daughters to the probability of catching diseases, and the certainty of getting dirt by such visits. Her subscription was never wanting when she was *quite sure* that the object was deserving. As I suspected that she a little overrated her own charity, I could not forbear observing, that I did not think it demandod a combination of all the virtues to entitle a poor sick wretch to a dinner. And though I durst not quote so light an author as Hamlet to her, I could not help saying to myself, *give every man his due and who shall 'scape whipping*? O! if God dealt so rigidly with us; if he waited to bestow his ordinary blessings till we were good enough to deserve them, who would be clothed? who would be fed? who would have a roof to shelter him?

It was not that she gave nothing away, but she had a great dislike to relieve any but those of her own religious persuasion.—Though her Redeemer laid down his life for all people, nations, and languages, she will only lay down her money for a very limited number of a very limited class. To be religious is not claim sufficient on her bounty; they must be religious in a particular way.

The Miss Ranbys had not been habituated to make any systematic provision for regular charity, or for any of those accidental calamities, for which the purse of the affluent should always be provided: and being very expensive in their persons, they had often not a six-pence to bestow, whon the most deserving case presented itself. This must frequently happen when there is no specific fund for charity which should be included in the general arrangement of expenses: and the exercise of benevolence, not be left to depend on the accidental state of the purse. If no new trinket happened to be wanted, these young ladies were liberal to any application, though always without judging of its merits by their own eyes and ears. But if there was a competition between a sick family and a new brooch, the brooch was sure to carry the day. This would not have been the case, had they been habituated to visit themselves the abodes of penury and woe. Their flexible young hearts would have been wrought upon by the actual sight of miseries, the impression of which was feeble when it reached their ears at a distance, surrounded as they were with all the softnesses and accommodations of luxurious life. 'They would do what they could. They hoped it was not so bad as it was represented.' They fell into the usual way of pacifying their consciences by their regrets; and brought themselves to believe that their sympathy with the suffering was an atonement for their not relieving it.

I observed, with concern, during my visit, how little the Christian temper seemed to be considered as a part of the Christian religion. This appeared in the daily concerns of this high professor. An opinion contradicted, a person of different religious views commended, the smallest opposition to her will, the intrusion of an unseasonable visitor, even an imperfection in the dressing of some dish at table: such trifles not only discomposed her, but the discomposure was manifested with a vehemence, which she was not aware was a fault; nor did she seem at all sensible that her religion was ever to be resorted to but on great occasions, forgetting that great occasions but rarely occur in

common life, and that these small passes, at which the enemy is perpetually entering, the true Christian will vigilantly guard.

I observed in Mrs. Ranby one striking inconsistency. While she considered it as forming a complete line of separation from the world, that she and her daughters abstained from public places, she had no objection to their indemnifying themselves for this forbearance, by devoting so monstrous a disproportion of their time to that very amusement which constitutes so principal a part of diversion abroad. The time which is redeemed from what is wrong, is of little value, if not dedicated to what is right; and it is not enough that the doctrines of the gospel furnish a subject for discussion, if they do not furnish a principle of action.

One of the most obvious defects which struck me in this, and two or three other families, whom I afterwards visited, was the want of companionableness in the daughters. They did not seem to form a part of the family compact; but made a kind of distinct branch of themselves. Surely, when only the parents and a few select friends are met together, in a family way, the daughters should contribute their portion to enliven the domestic circle. They were always ready to sing and to play, but did not take the pains to produce themselves in conversation; but seemed to carry on a distinct intercourse, by herding, and whispering, and laughing together.

In some women who seemed to be possessed of good ingredients, they were so ill mixed up together as not to produce an elegant, interesting companion. It appeared to me that three of the grand inducements in the choice of a wife, are, that a man may have a directress for his family, a preceptress for his children, and a companion for himself. Can it be honestly affirmed that the present habits of domestic life are generally favourable to the union of these three essentials? Yet which of them can a man of sense and principle consent to relinquish in his conjugal prospects?

CHAP. VII.

I RETURNED to town at the end of a few days. To a speculative stranger, a *London day* presents every variety of circumstance in every conceivable shape of which human life is susceptible. When you trace the solicitude of the morning countenance, the anxious exploring of the morning paper, the eager interrogation of the morning guest—when you hear the dismal enumeration of losses by land, and perils by sea—taxes trebling, dangers multiplying, commerce annihilating, war protracted, invasion threatening, destruction impending—your mind catches and communicates the terror, and you feel yourself 'falling with a falling state.'

But when, in the course of the very same day, you meet these gloomy prognosticators at the sumptuous, not 'dinner, but hecatomb,' at the gorgeous fete, the splendid spectacle; when you hear the frivolous discourse, witness the luxurious dissipation, contemplate the boundless indulgence, and observe the ruinous gaming you would be ready to exclaim, 'Am I not supping in the Antipodes of that land in which I breakfasted? Surely this is a country of different men, different characters, and different circumstances. This is at least a place in which there is neither fear nor danger, nor want, nor misery, nor war.

If you observe the overflowing subscriptions raised, the innumerable societies formed, the committees appointed, the agents employed, the royal patrons engaged, the noble presidents provided, the palace-like structures erected and all this to alleviate, to cure, and even to prevent every calamity, which the indigent can suffer, or the affluent conceive; to remove not only want but ignorance; to suppress not only misery but vice, would you not exclaim with Hamlet, 'What a piece of work is man? How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In action how like an angel! In compassion, how like a God!'

If you look into the whole comet-like eccentric orb of the human character; if you compared all the struggling contrariety of principle and of passion; the clashing of opinion and of action, of resolution and of performance; the victories of evil over the propensities to good; if you contrasted the splendid virtue with the disorderly vice; the exalted generosity with the selfish narrowness; the provident bounty with the thoughtless prodigality; the extremes of all that is dignified, with the excesses of all that is abject, would you not exclaim in the very spirit of Pascal, 'O! the grandeur and the littleness, the excellence and the corruption, the majesty and the meanness of man!

If you attended the debates in our great deliberative assemblies; if you heard the argument and the eloquence, 'the wisdom and the wit,' the public spirit and the disinterestedness; Curtius's devotedness to his country, and Regulus's disdain of self, expressed with all the logic which reason can suggest, and embellished with all the rhetoric which fancy can supply, would you not rapturously cry out, this is

> Above all Greek, above all Roman fame?

But if you discern the bitter personality, the incurable prejudice, the cutting retort, the suspicious implication, the recriminating sneer, the cherished animosity; if you beheld the interests of an empire standing still, the business of the civilized globe suspended, while two intellectual gladiators are thrusting each to give the other a fall, and to show his own strength; would you not lament the littleness of the great, the infirmities of the good, and the weaknesses of the wise? Would you not, soaring a flight far above Hamlet or Pascal, apostrophize with the Royal Psalmist, 'Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou regardest him?'

But to descend to my individual concerns.—Among my acquaintance I visited two separate families, where the daughters were remarkably attractive, and more than usually endowed with beauty, sense, and elegance; but I was deterred from following up the acquaintance, by observing in each family, practices which,

though very different, almost equally revolted me.

In one, where the young ladies had large fortunes, they insinuated themselves into the admiration, and invited the familiarity of young men, by attentions the most flattering, and civilities the most alluring. When they had made sure of their aim, and the admirers were encouraged to make proposals, the ladies burst into a loud laugh, wondered what the man could mean; they never dreamt of any thing more than common politeness; then petrified them with distant looks, and turned about to practice the same arts on others.

The other family, in which I thought I had secured an agreeable intimacy, I instantly deserted on observing the gracious and engaging reception given by the ladies to more than one libertine of the most notorious profligacy. The men were handsome, and elegant, and fashionable, and had figured in newspapers and courts of justice. This degrading popularity rather attracted than repelled attention; and while the guilty associates in their crime were shunned with abhorrence by these very ladies, the specious undoers were not only received with complaisance, but there was a sort of competition who should be most strenuous in their endeavours to attract them. Surely women of fashion can hardly make a more corrupt use of influence, a talent for which they will be peculiarly accountable. Surely, mere personal purity can hardly deserve the name of virtue in those who can sanction notoriously vicious characters, which their reprobation, if it could not reform, would at least degrade.

On a further acquaintance, I found Sir John and Lady Belfield to be persons of much worth. —They were candid, generous and sincere. They saw the errors of the world in which they lived, but had not resolution to emancipate themselves from its shackels. They partook, indeed, very sparingly of its diversions, not so much because they suspected their evil tendency, as because they had better resources in themselves.

Indeed, it is wonderful that more people, from mere good sense and just taste, without the operation of any religious consideration, do not, when the first ardour is cooled, perceive the futility of what is called pleasure, and decline it as the man declines the amusements of the child. But fashionable society produces few persons who, like the ex-courtier of King David, assign their four-score years as a reason for no longer 'delighting in the voice of singing men and singing women.'

Sir John and Lady Belfield, however, kept up a large and general acquaintance; and it is not easy to continue to associate with the world, without retaining something of its spirit. Their standard of morals was high, compared with that of those with whom they lived; but when the standard of the gospel was suggested they drew in a little, and thought *things might be carried too far*. There was nothing in their practice which made it their interest to hope that Christianity might not be true. They both assented to its doctrines, and lived in a kind of general hope of its final promises. But their views were neither correct nor elevated. They were contented to generalize the doctrines of scripture, and though they venerated its awful truths in the aggregate, they rather took them upon trust than laboured to understand them, or to imbue their minds with a spirit of them. Many a high professor, however, might have blushed to see how carefully they exercised not a few Christian dispositions; how kind and patient they were! how favourable in their constructions of the actions of others! how charitable to the necessitous! how exact in veracity! and how tender of the reputation of their neighbour!

Sir John had been early hurt by living so much with men of the world, with wits, politicians, and philosophers. This, though he had escaped the contagion of false principles, had kept back the growth of such as were true. Men versed in the world, and abstracted from all religious society, begin, in time, a little to suspect whether their own religious opinions may not possibly be wrong, or at least rigid, when they see them so opposite to those of persons to whose judgment they are accustomed to look up in other points. He found, too, that in the society in which he lived, the reputation of religion detracted much from that of talents, and a man does not care to have his understanding questioned by those in whose opinion he wishes to stand well. This apprehension did not, indeed, drive him to renounce his principles, but it led him to conceal them; and that piety which is forcibly kept out of sight, which has nothing to fortify, and every thing to repel it, is too apt to decline.

His marriage with an amiable woman, whose virtues and graces attached him to his own home, drew him off from the most dangerous of his prior connexions. This union had at once improved his character and augmented his happiness. If Lady Belfield erred, it was through excess of kindness and candour. Her kindness led to the too great indulgence of her children; and her candour to the too favourable construction of the errors of her acquaintance. She was the very reverse of my Hampstead friend. Whereas Mrs. Ranby thought hardly any body would be saved, Lady Belfield comforted herself that hardly any body was in danger. This opinion was not taken up as a palliative to quiet her conscience, on account of the sins of her own conduct, for her conduct was remarkably correct; but it sprung from a natural sweetness of temper, joined to a mind not sufficiently informed and guided by scripture truth. She was candid and teachable, but as she could not help seeing that she had more religion than most of her acquaintance, she felt a secret complacency in observing how far her principles rose above theirs, instead of an humbling conviction of how far her own fell below the requisitions of the gospel.

The fundamental error was, that she had no distinct view of the corruption of human nature. She often lamented the weaknesses and vices of individuals, but thought all vice an incidental not a radical mischief, the effect of thoughtlessness and casual temptation. She talked with discrimination of the faults of some of her chil-

dren; but while she rejoiced in the happier dispositions of others, she never suspected that they had all brought into the world with them a natural tendency to evil; and thought it cruel to suppose that such innocent little things, had any such wrong propensities as education would not effectually cure. In every thing the complete contrast of Mrs. Ranby—as the latter thought education could do nothing, Lady Belfield thought it would do every thing; that there was no good tendency which it would not bring to perfection, and no corruption which it could not completely eradicate. On the operation of a higher influence she placed too little dependence; while Mrs. Ranby rested in an unreasonable trust on an interference not warranted by scripture.

In regard to her children, Lady Belfield was led by the strength of her affection to extreme indulgence. She encouraged no vice in them, but she did not sufficiently check those indications which are the seeds of vice. She reproved the actual fault, but never thought of implanting a principle which might extirpate the evil from whence the fault sprung; so that the individual error and the individual correction were continually recurring.

As Mrs. Ranby, I had observed, seldom quoted any sacred writer but St. Paul, I remarked that Lady Belfield admired almost exclusively Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and the historical books of the Bible. Of the Epistles, that of St. James was her favourite; the others she thought chiefly, if not entirely applicable to the circumstances of the Jews and Pagans, to the converts from among whom they were addressed. If she entertained rather an awful reverence for the doctrinal parts, than an earnest wish to study them, it arose from the common mistake of believing that they were purely speculative, without being aware of their deep importance. But if these two ladies were diametrically opposite to each other in certain points, both were frequently right in what they assumed, and both wrong only in what they rejected. Each contended for one half of that which will not save, when disjoined from the other, but which, when united to it, makes up the complete Christian character.

Lady Belfield, who was, if I may so speak, constitutionally charitable, almost thought that heaven might be purchased by charity. She inverted the valuable superstructure of good works, and laid them as her foundation; and while Mrs. Ranby would not perhaps much have blamed Moses for breaking the tables of the law, had he only demolished the second, Lady Belfield would have saved the second as the more important of the two.

Lady Belfield had less vanity than any woman I ever knew, who was not governed by a very strict religious principle. Her modesty never courted the admiration of the world, but her timidity too much dreaded its censure. She would not do a wrong thing to obtain any applause, but she omitted some right ones from the dread of blame.

CHAP. VIII.

The house of Sir John Belfield was become a pleasant kind of home to me. He and his lady seldom went out in an evening. Happy in each other and in their children, though they lived much with the rational, they associated as little as they thought possible with the racketing world. Yet being known to be generally at home, they were exposed to the inroads of certain invaders, called fine ladies, who, always afraid of being too early for their parties, are constantly on the watch, how to disburden themselves, for the intermediate hour, of the heavy commodity *time;* a raw material, which as they seldom work up at home, they are always willing to truck against the time of their more domestic acquaintance. Now, as these last *have* always something to do, it is an unfair traffic; 'all the reciprocity is on one side,' to borrow the expression of an illustrious statesman; and the barter is as disadvantageous to the sober home trader, as that of the honest negroes, who exchange their gold dust and ivory for the beads and bits of glass of the wily English.

These nightly irruptions, though sometimes inconvenient to my friends, were of use to me, as they enabled me to see and judge more of the gay world, than I could have done without going in search of it; a risk, which I thought bore no proportion to the gain. It was like learning the language of the enemy's country at home.

One evening, when we were sitting happily alone in the library. Lady Belfield, working at her embroidery, cheerfully joining in our little discussions, and comparing our peaceful pleasures with those pursued by the occupiers of the countless carriages which were tearing up the 'wheel-worn streets,' or jostling each other at the door of the next house, where a grand assembly was collecting its myriads—Sir John asked what should be the evening book. Then rising, he took down from the shelf Akenside's Pleasures of Imagination.

'Is it,' said he, as soon as he sat down, 'the rage for novelty, or a real degeneracy of taste, that we now so seldom hear of a poet, who, when I was a boy, was the admiration of every man who had a relish for true genius? I cannot defend his principles, since in a work, of which *Man* is professedly the object, he has overlooked his *immortality;* a subject, which one wonders did not force itself upon him, as so congenial to the sublimity of his genius, whatever his religious views might have been. But to speak of him only as a poet; a work, which abounds in a richer profusion of images, and a more variegated luxuriance of expression than the Pleasures of Imagination, cannot easily be found. The flimsy metre of our day seems to add fresh value to his sinewy verse. We have no happier master of poetic numbers, none who better knew

To build the lofty rhyme.

The condensed vigour, so indispensable to blank verse, the skilful variation of the pause, the masterly structure of the period, and all the occult mysteries of the art, can perhaps be best learnt from Akenside. If he could have conveyed to Thompson his melody and rhythm, and Thompson would have paid him back in perspicuity and transparency of meaning, how they might have enriched each other!'

'I confess,' said I, 'in reading Akenside, I have now and then found the same passage at once enchanting and unintelligible. As it happens to many frequenters of the Opera, the music always transports, but the words are not always understood.' I then desired my friend to gratify us with the first book of the Pleasures of Imagination.

Sir John is a passionate lover of poetry, in which he has a fine taste. He read it with much spirit and feeling, especially these truly classical lines.

Mind, mind alone, bear witness earth and heaven,
The living fountains in itself contains
Of beauteous and sublime: here hand in hand
Sit paramount the graces; here enthron'd,
Celestial Venus, with divinest airs
Invites the soul to never-fading joy.

'The reputation of this exquisite passage,' said he, laying down the book, 'is established by the consenting suffrage of all men of taste, though by the critical countenance you are beginning to put on, you look as if you had a mind to attack it.'

'So far from it,' said I, 'that I know nothing more splendid in the whole mass of our poetry. And I feel almost guilty of high treason against the majesty of the sublimer Muses, in the remark I am going to hazard, on the celebrated lines which follow. The Poet's object, through this and the two following pages, is to establish the infinite superiority of mind over unconscious matter, even in its fairest forms. The idea is as just as the execution is beautiful: so also is his supreme elevation of intellect, over

Greatness of bulk, or symmetry of parts.

Nothing again can be finer than his subsequent preference of

The powers of genius and design,

over even the stupendous range

Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres.

He proceeds to ransack the stores of the mental and the moral world, as he had done the world of matter, and with a pen dipped in Hippocrene, opposes to the latter

The charms of virtuous friendship, &c.
* * * * *
The candid blush
Of him who strives with fortune to be just.
* * * * *
All the wild majesty of private life.
* * * * *
The graceful tear that streams from others' woes.

'Why, Charles,' said Sir John, 'I am glad to find you the enthusiastic eulogist of the passage of which I suspected you were about to be the saucy censurer.'

'Censure,' replied I, 'is perhaps too strong a term for any part, especially the most admired part of this fine poem. I need not repeat the lines on which I was going to risk a slight observation; they live in the mind and memory of every lover of the Muses.'

'I will read the next passage, however,' said Sir John, 'that I may be better able to controvert your criticism.'

Look then abroad through nature to the range
Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres.
Wheeling unshaken through the void immense,
And speak, oh man! does this capacious scene
With half that kindling majesty dilate
Thy strong conception, as when Brutus rose
Refulgent from the stroke of Cæsar's fate
Amid the crowd of patriots, and his arm
Aloft extending, like eternal Jove
When guilt brings down the thunder call'd aloud
On Tully's name, and shook his crimson steel,
And bade the father of his country hail;
For lo! the tyrant prostrate in the dust,
And Rome again is free!

'What a grand and powerful passage!' said Sir John.

'I acknowledge it,' said I, 'but is it as just as it is grand? *Le vrai est le seul beau.* It is a fair and direct opposition between mind and matter! The poet could not have expressed the image more nobly; but might he not, out of the abundant treasures of his opulent mind, have chosen it with more felicity? Is an act of murder, even of an usurper, as happily contrasted with the organization of matter, as the other beautiful instances I named, and which he goes on to select? The superiority of mental beauty is the point he is establishing, and his elaborate preparation leads you to expect all his other instances to be drawn from pure mental excellence. His other exemplifications are general, this is particular. They are a class, this is only a variety. I question if Milton, who was at least as ardent a champion for liberty, and as much of a party man as Akenside, would have used this illustration. Milton, though he often insinuates a political stroke in his great poem, always, I think, generalizes. Whatever had been his principles, or at whatever period he had written, I question, when he wanted to describe the overthrow of authority by the rebel angels, if he would have illustrated it by Cromwell's seizing the mace, or the decapitation of Charles; much less, if he would have selected these two instances as the triumph of mind over matter.'

'But,' said Sir John, 'you forget that Akenside professedly adopts the language of Cicero in his second philippic.' He then read the note beginning with, Cæsare interfecto, &c.

'True,' said I, 'I am not arguing the matter as a point of fact, but as a point of just application. I pass over the comparison of Brutus with Jove, which by the way would have become Tully better than Akenside, but which Tully would have perhaps thought too bold. Cicero adorns his oration with this magnificent description. He relates it as an event, the other uses it as an illustration of that to which I humbly conceive it does not exactly apply. The orator paints the violent death of a hero; the poet adopts the description of this violent death, or rather of the stroke which caused it, to illustrate the perfection of intellectual grandeur.—After all, it is as much a party question as a poetical one. A question on which the critic will be apt to be guided in his decision, by his politics rather than by his taste. The splendour of the passage, however, will inevitably dazzle the feeling reader, till it produce the common effect of ex-

brightness, that of somewhat blinding older.

CHAP. IX.

LE we were thus pleasantly engaged, the . announced Mrs. Fentham; and a fashion- oking woman, about the middle of life, youthfully drest, and not far from hand- made her appearance. Instead of break- orth into the usual modish jargon, she po- ely entered into the subject in which she found us engaged; envied lady Belfield the happiness of elegant quiet, which she herself might have been equally enjoying at her own house, and professed herself a warm admirer of poetry. She would probably have professed an equal fondness for metaphysics, geometry, military tactics, or the Arabic language, if she had happened to have found us employed in the study of either.

From poetry the transition to painting was easy and natural. Mrs. Fentham possessed all the phraseology of connoisseurship, and asked me if I was fond of pictures. I professed the delight I took in them in strong, that is, in true terms. She politely said, that Mr. Fentham had a very tolerable collection of the best masters, and particularly a Titian, which she would be happy to have the honour of showing me the next morning. I bowed my thankful assent; she appointed the hour, and soon after, looking at her watch, said she was afraid she must leave the delights of such a select and interesting society for a far less agreeable party.

When she was gone, I expressed my obligations to her politeness, and anticipated the pleasure I should have in seeing her pictures. 'She is much more anxious that you should see her *Originals*,' said Lady Belfield, smiling; 'the kindness is not *quite* disinterested; take care of your heart.' Sir, John, rather gravely, said, 'It is with reluctance that I ever say any thing to the prejudice of any body that I receive into my house; but as the son of my valued friend, I think it fair to tell you that this vigilant matron keeps a keen look-out after all young men of fortune. This is not the first time that that Titian has been made the bait to catch a promising acquaintance. Indeed, it is now grown so stale, that had you not been a new man, she would hardly have risked it. If you had happened not to like painting, some book would have been offered you. The return of a book naturally brings on a visit. But all these devices have not yet answered. The damsels still remain, like Shakespeare's plaintive maid, 'in single blessedness.'—They do not, however, like her, spend gloomy nights

> Chaunting cold hymns to the pale, lifeless moon,

but in singing sprightlier roundelays to livelier auditors.'

I punctually attended the invitation, effectually shielded from danger by the friendly intimation, and a still more infallible Ægis, the charge of my father never to embark in any engagement till I had made my visit to Mr. Stanley. My veneration for his memory operated as a complete defence.

I saw and admired the pictures. The pictures brought on an invitation to dinner. I found Mrs. Fentham to be in her conversation, a sensible, correct, knowing woman. Her daughters were elegant in their figures, well instructed in the usual accomplishments, well bred and apparently well tempered. Mr. Fentham was a man of business, and of the world. He had a great income from a place under government, out of which the expenses of his family permitted him to save nothing. Private fortune he had little or none. His employment engaged him almost entirely, so that he interfered but little with domestic affairs. A general air of elegance, almost amounting to magnificence, pervaded the whole establishment.

I at first saw but little to excite any suspicion of the artificial character of the lady of the house. The first gleam of light which let in the truth was the expressions most frequent in Mrs. Fentham's mouth—'What will the world say?' 'What will people think?' 'How will such a thing appear?' 'Will it have a good look?' 'The world is of opinion.' 'Won't such a thing be censured?' On a little acquaintance I discovered that human applause was the motive of all she said, and reputation her great object in all she did. Opinion was the idol to which she sacrificed. Decorum was the inspirer of her duties, and praise the reward of them. The standard of the world was the standard by which she weighed actions. She had no higher principle of conduct. She adopted the forms of religion, because she saw that, carried to a certain degree, they rather produce credit than censure. While her husband adjusted his accounts on the Sunday morning, she regularly carried her daughters to church, except a head-ache had been caught at the Saturday's opera; and as regularly exhibited herself and them afterwards in Hyde Park. As she said it was Mr. Fentham's leisure day, she complimented him with always having a great dinner on Sundays, but alleged her piety as a reason for not having cards in the evening at home, though she had no scruple to make one at a private party at a friend's house; soberly conditioning, however, that there should not be more than *three tables*; the right or wrong, the decorum or impropriety, the gaiety or gravity always being made specifically to depend on the number of tables.

She was, in general, extremely severe against women who had lost their reputation; though she had no hesitation in visiting a few of the most dishonourable, if they were of high rank, or belonged to a certain set. In that case, she excused herself by saying, 'that as fashionable people continued to countenance them, it was not for her to be scrupulous—One must sail with the stream—I can't set my face against the world.' But if an unhappy girl had been drawn aside, or one who had not rank to bear her out had erred, that altered the case, and she then expressed the most virtuous indignation. When modesty happened to be in repute, not the flocks of Queen Elizabeth and her courtly virgins were more entrenched in ruffs and shrouded in tuck-

ers, than those of Mrs. Fentham and her daughters; but when *display* became the order of the day, the Grecian Venus was scarcely more unconscious of a veil.

With a very good understanding she never allowed herself one original thought, or one spontaneous action. Her ideas, her language, and her conduct, were entirely regulated by the ideas, language, and conduct of those who stood well with the world. Vanity in her was a steady, inward, but powerfully pervading principle. It did not evaporate in levity or indiscretion, but was the hidden though forcible spring of her whole course of action. She had all the gratification which vanity affords in secret, and all the credit which its prudent operation procures in public. She was apparently guilty of no excess of any kind. She had a sober scale of creditable vices, and never allowed herself to exceed a few stated degrees in any of them. She reprobated gaming, but could not exist without cards. Masquerades she censured as highly extravagant and dangerous, but when given by ladies of high quality, at their own houses, she thought them an elegant and proper amusement. Though she sometimes went to the play, she did not care for what passed on the stage, for she confessed the chief pleasure the theatre afforded, was to reckon up, when she came home, how many dutchesses and countesses had bowed to her across the house.

A complete despot at home, her arbitrariness is so veiled by correctness of manner, and studied good breeding, that she obtains the credit of great mildness and moderation. She is said not to love her daughters who come too near her in age, and go too much beyond her in beauty to be forgiven; yet like a consummate politician, she is ever labouring for their advancement. She has generally several schemes in hand, and always one scheme under another, the under plot ready to be brought forward if the principal one fails. Though she encourages pretenders, yet she is afraid to accept of a tolerable proposal, lest a better should present itself: but if the loftier hope fails, she then contrives to lure back the inferior offer. She can balance to a nicety, in the calculation of chances, the advantages or disadvantages of a higher possibility against a lower probability.

Though she neither wants reading nor taste, her mind is never sufficiently disengaged to make her an agreeable companion. Her head is always at work, conjecturing the event of every fresh ball and every new acquaintance. She cannot even

> Take her tea without a stratagem.

She set out in life with a very slender acquaintance, and clung for a while to one or two damaged peeresses, who were not received by women of their own rank. But I am told it was curious to see with what adroitness she could extricate herself from a disreputable acquaintance, when a more honourable one stepped in to fill the niche. She made her way rapidly by insinuating to one person of note how intimate she was with another, and to both what handsome things each said of the other. By constant attentions, petty offices, and measured flattery, she has got footing into almost every house of distinction. Her decorum is invariable. She boasts that she was never guilty of the indecency of violent passion. Poor woman! she fancies there is no violent passion but that of anger. Little does she think that ambition, vanity, the hunger of applause, a rage for being universally known, are all violent passions, however modified by discretion, or varnished by art. She suffers too, all that 'vexation of spirit' which treads on the heels of 'vanity.' Disappointment and jealousy poison the days devoted to pleasure. The party does not answer. The wrong people never stay away, and the right ones never come. The guest for whom the fete is made is sure to fail. Her party is thin, while that of her competitor overflows; or there is a plenty of dowagers and a paucity of young men. When the costly and elaborate supper is on the table, excuses arrive: even if the supper is crowded the daughters remain upon hands. How strikingly does she exemplify the strong expression of—'labouring in the fire for very vanity'—'of giving her money for that which is not bread, and her labour for that which satisfieth not!'

After spending the day at Mrs. Fentham's I went to sup with my friends in Cavendish square. Lady Belfield was impatient for my history of the dinner. But Sir John said, laughing, 'You shall not say a word, Charles—I can tell how it was as exactly as if I had been there. Charlotte, who has the best voice, was brought out to sing, but was placed a little behind, as her person is not quite perfect; Maria, who is the most picturesque figure, was put to *attitudinize* at the harp, arrayed in the costume, and assuming the fascinating graces of Marmion's Lady Heron:

> Fair was her rounded arm, as o'er
> The strings her fingers flew.

Then, Charles, was the moment of peril! then, according to your favourite Milton's most incongruous image,

> You took in sounds that might create a soul
> Under the ribs of death.

For fear, however, that your heart of adamant should hold out against all these perilous assaults, its vulnerability was tried in other quarters. The Titian would naturally lead to Lavinia's drawings. A beautiful sketch of the lakes would be produced, with a gentle intimation, what a sweet place Westmoreland must be to live in! When you had exhausted all proper raptures on the art and on the artist, it would be recollected, that as Westmoreland was so near Scotland, you would naturally be fond of a reel. The reel of course succeeded.' Then, putting himself into an attitude, and speaking theatrically, he continued

> 'Then universal Pan,
> Knit with the graces and the hours in dance—,

Oh! no, I forget, universal Pan could not join; but he could admire. Then all the perfections of all the nymphs burst on you in full blaze.

Such a concentration of attractions you could never resist! You are *but* a man, and now doubtless a lost man.' Here he stopped to finish his laugh, and I was driven reluctantly to acknowledge that his picture, though a caricature, was, notwithstanding, a resemblance.

'And so,' said Sir John, 'you were brought under no power of incantation, by this dangerous visit. You will be driven, like the tempted Ithican, to tie yourself to a mast, or flee for safety from the enchantment of these Syrens.'

While we were at supper, with more gravity, he said, 'Among the various objects of ambition, there are few in life which brings less accession to its comfort, than an unceasing struggle to rise to an elevation in society very much above the level of our own condition, without being aided by any stronger ascending power than mere vanity. Great talents, of whatever kind, have a natural tendency to rise, and to lift their possessor. The flame, in mounting, does but obey its impulse. But when there is no energy more powerful than the passion to be great, destitute of the gifts which confer greatness, the painful efforts of ambition are like water, forced above its level by mechanical powers. It requires constant exertions of art, to keep up what art at first set a-going. Poor Mrs. Fentham's head is perpetually at work to maintain the elevation she has reached. And how little, after all, is she considered by those on whose caresses her happiness depends! She has lost the esteem of her original circle, where she might have been respected, without gaining that of her high associates, who, though they receive her, still refuse her claims of equality. She is not considered as of their *establishment*, it is but *toleration* at best.'

At Mrs. Fentham's I encountered Lady Bab Lawless, a renowned modish dowager, famous for laying siege to the heart of every distinguished man, with the united artillery of her own wit and her daughter's beauty. How many ways there are of being wrong! She was of a character diametrically opposite to that of Mrs. Fentham. She had the same end in view, but the means she used to accomplish it were of a bolder strain. Lady Bab affected no delicacy, she laughed at reserve, she had shaken hands with decorum.

She held the *noisy* tenor of her way,

with no assumed refinement; and, so far from shielding her designs behind the mask of decency, she disdained the obsolete expedient. Her plans succeeded the more infallibly, because her frankness defeated all suspicion. A man could never divine that such gay and open assaults could have their foundation in design, and he gave her full credit for artless simplicity, at the moment she was catching him in her toils. If she now and then had gone too far, and by a momentary oversight or excessive levity had betrayed too much, with infinite address she would make a crane-neck turn, and fall to discussing, not without ability, some moral or theological topic. Thus she affected to establish the character of a woman thoughtless through wit, indiscreet through simplicity, but religious on principle.

As there is no part of the appendage to a wife, which I have ever more dreaded than a Machiavelian mother, I should have been deaf to wit and blind to beauty, and dead to advances, had their united batteries been directed against me. But I had not the ambition to aspire to that honour. I was much too low a mark for her lofty aim. She had a natural antipathy to every name that could not be found in the red book. She equally shrunk from untitled opulence and indigent nobility. She knew by instinct if a younger son was in the room, and by a petrifying look checked his most distant approaches; while with her powerful spells, she never failed to draw within her magic circle the splendid heir, and charm him to her purpose.

Highly born herself, she had early been married to a rich man of inferior rank, for the sake of a large settlement. Her plan was, that her daughters (who, by the way, are modest and estimable) should find in the man they married, still higher birth than her own, and more riches than her husband's.

It was a curious speculation to compare these two friends, and to observe how much less the refined manœuvres of Mrs. Fentham answered, than the open assaults of the intrepid Lady Bab. All the intricacies and labyrinths which the former had been so skilful and so patient in weaving, have not yet enthralled one captive; while the composed effrontery, the affecting to take for granted the offer which was never meant to be made, and treating that as concluded, which was never so much as intended, drew the unconscious victim of the other into the trap, before he knew it was set; the depth of her plot consisting in not appearing to have any. It was a novelty in intrigue. An originality which defied all competition, and in which no imitator has any chance of success.

CHAP. X.

Sir John carried me one morning to call on Lady Denham, a dowager of fashion, who had grown old in the trammels of the world. Though she seems resolved to die in the harness, yet she piques herself on being very religious, and no one inveighs against infidelity or impiety with more pointed censure. 'She has a grand-daughter,' said Sir John, 'who lives with her, and whom she has trained to walk precisely in her own steps, and which, she thinks, *is the way she should go*. 'The girl,' added he, smiling, 'is well looking, and will have a handsome fortune, and I am persuaded that, as my friend, I could procure you a good reception.'

We were shown into her dressing-room, where we found her with a book lying open before her. From a glance which I caught of the large black letter, I saw it was a *Week's Preparation*. This book it seems constantly lay open before her from breakfast till dinner, at this season. It was Passion week. But as this is the room in which she sees all her morning visitors, to none of whom is she ever denied, even at this period of retreat, she could only pick up momentary snatches of reading in the short intervals between one person bowing out

and another courtseying in. Miss Denham sat by, painting flowers.

Sir John asked her Ladyship if she would go and dine in a family way with Lady Belfield. She drew up, looked grave, and said, with much solemnity, that she should never think of dining abroad at this holy season. Sir John said, 'as we have neither cards nor company, I thought you might as well have eaten your chicken in my house as in your own.' But though she thought it a sin to dine with a sober family, she made herself amends for the sacrifice, by letting us see that her heart was brimful of the world, pressed down and running over. She indemnified herself for her abstinence from its diversions, by indulging in the only pleasures which she thought compatible with the sanctity of the season, uncharitable gossip, and unbounded calumny. She would not touch a card for the world, but played over to Sir John the whole game of the preceding Saturday night; told him by what a shameful inattention her partner had lost the odd trick; and that she should not have been beaten after all, had not her adversary, she verily believed, contrived to look over her hand.

Sir John seized the only minute in which we were alone, to ask her to add a guinea to a little sum he was collecting for a poor tradesman with a large family, who had been burnt out a few nights ago. 'His wife,' added he, 'was your favourite maid Dixon, and both are deserving people.'—'Ah, poor Dixon! she was always unlucky,' replied the Lady. 'How could they be so careless? Surely they might have put the fire out sooner. They should not have let it get ahead. I wonder people are not more active.'—'It is too late to inquire about that,' said Sir John; 'the question now is, not how their loss might have been prevented, but how it may be repaired.'—'I am really quite sorry,' said she, 'that I can give you nothing. I have had so many calls lately, that my charity-purse is completely exhausted—and that abominable Property-tax makes me quite a beggar.'

While she was speaking, I glanced on the open leaf at, 'Charge them that are rich in this world that they be ready to give;' and directing my eye further, it fell on, 'Be not deceived. God is not mocked.' These were the awful passages which formed a part of her *preparation*, and this was the practical use she made of them!

A dozen persons of both sexes 'had their exits and their entrances' during our stay; for the scene was so strange, and the character so new to me, that I felt unwilling to stir. Among other visitors was Signor Squallini, a favourite opera singer, whom she patronized. Her face was lighted up with joy at sight of him. He brought her an admired new air, in which he was preparing himself, and sung a few notes, that she might say she heard it the first. She felt all the dignity of the privilege, and extolled the air with all the phrases, cant, and rapture of *dilettanteism*.

After this, she drew a paper from between the leaves of her still opened book, which she showed him. It contained a list of all the company she had engaged to attend his benefit. 'I will call on some others,' said she, 'to-morrow after prayers; I am sorry this is a week in which I cannot see my friends at their assemblies, but on Sunday you know it will be over, and I shall have my house full in the evening. Next Monday will be Easter, and I shall be at our dear Dutchess's private masquerade, and then I hope to see and engage, the whole world.. 'Here are ten guineas,' said she in a half whisper to the obsequious Signor, 'you may mention what I gave for *my* ticket, and it may set the fashion going.' She then pressed a ticket on Sir John and another on me. He declined, saying with great *sang froid*, 'You know we are *Handelians*.' What excuse I made I do not well know; I only know that I saved my ten guineas with a very bad grace, but felt bound in conscience to add them to what I had before subscribed to poor Dixon.

Hitherto I had never seen the gnat-strainer, and the camel-swallower, so strikingly exemplified.—And it is observable how forcibly the truth of Scripture is often illustrated by those who live in the boldest opposition to it. If you have any doubt while you are reading, go into the world, and your belief will be confirmed.

As we took our leave, she followed us to the door, I hoped it was with the guinea for the fire; but she only whispered Sir John, though he did not go himself, to prevail on such and such ladies to go to Squallini's benefit. 'Pray do,' said she, 'it will be charity. Poor fellow! he is sadly out at elbows, he has a fine liberal spirit, and can hardly make his large income do.

When we got into the street we admired the splendid chariot and laced liveries of this *indigent* professor, for whom our charity had been just solicited, and whose 'liberal spirit,' my friend assured me, consisted in sumptuous living, and the indulgence of every fashionable vice.

I could not restrain my exclamations as soon as we got out of hearing. To Sir John the scene was amusing, but to him it had lost the interest of novelty. 'I have known her ladyship about twelve years,' said he, 'and of course have witnessed a dozen of these annual paroxysms of devotion. I am persuaded that she is a gainer by them on her own principle, that is, in the article of pleasure. This short periodical abstinence whets her appetite to a keener relish for suspended enjoyment; and while she fasts from amusements, her blinded conscience enjoys a feast of self-gratulation. She feeds on the remembrance of her self-denial, even after she has returned to those delights which she thinks her retreat has fairly purchased. She considers religion as a system of pains and penalties, by the voluntary enduring of which, for a short time, she shall compound for all the indulgencies of the year.—She is persuaded that something must be annually forborne, in order to make her peace. After these periodical atonements, the Almighty being in her debt, will be obliged at least to pay her with heaven. This composition, which rather brings her in on the creditor side, not only quiets her conscience for the past, but enables her joyfully to enter on a new score.'

I asked Sir John, how Lady Belfield *could* associate with a woman of a character so opposite to her own? 'What can we do?' said he; 'we cannot be singular. We must conform a

little to the world in which we live.' Trusting to his extreme good nature, and fired at the scene to which I had been a witness, I ventured to observe that non-conformity to such a world as that of which this lady was a specimen, was the very criterion of the religion taught by Him who had declared by way of pre-eminent distinction, that his kingdom was not of this world.'

'You are a young man,' answered he, mildly, 'and this delicacy and these prejudices would soon wear off, if you were to live some time in the world.'—'My dear Sir John,' said I, warmly, 'by the grace of God, I never *will* live in the world; at least, I will never associate with that part of it, whose society would be sure to wear off that delicacy and remove those prejudices. Why this is retaining all the worst part of popery.—Here is the abstinence without the devotion; the outward observance without the interior humiliation; the suspending of sin, not only without any design of forsaking it, but with a fixed resolution of returning to it, and of increasing the gust by the forbearance. Nay the sins she retains in order to mitigate the horrors of forbearance, are as bad as those she lays down. A postponed sin, which is fully intended to be resumed, is as much worse than a sin persisted in, as deliberate hypocrisy is worse than the impulse of passion. I desire not a more explicit comment on a text, which I was once almost tempted to think unjust; I mean, the greater facility of the entrance of gross and notorious offenders into heaven than of these formalists. No! if Miss Denham were sole heiress to Crœsus, and joined the beauty of Cleopatra to the wit of Sappho, I never would connect myself with a disciple of that school.'

'How many ways there are of being unhappy!' said Sir John, as we returned one day from a ride we had taken some miles out of town, to call on a friend of his. 'Mr. Stanhope, whom we have just quitted, is a man of great elegance of mind. His early life was passed in liberal studies, and in the best company. But his fair prospects were blasted by a disproportionate marriage. He was drawn in by a vanity too natural to young men, that of fancying himself preferred by a woman who had no one recommendation but beauty. To be admired by her whom all his acquaintance admired, gratified his *amour propre*. He was overcome by her marked attentions so far as to declare himself, without knowing her real disposition. It was some time before his prepossession allowed him to discover that she was weak and ill-informed, selfish and bad tempered. What she wanted in understanding, she made up in spirit. The more she exacted, the more he submitted; and her demands grew in proportion to his sacrifices. My friend, with patient affection, struggled for a long time to raise her character, and to enlighten her mind; but finding that she pouted whenever he took up a book, and that she even hid the newspaper before he had read it, complaining that he preferred any thing to her company; the softness of his temper and his habitual indolence at length prevailed. His better judgment sunk in the hopeless contest. For a quiet life, he has submitted to a disgraceful life. The compromise has not answered. He has incurred the degradation which, by a more spirited conduct, he might have avoided, and has missed the quiet which he sacrificed his dignity to purchase. He compassionates her folly, and continues to translate her wearisome interruptions into the flattering language of affection.

In compliment to her, no less than in justification of his own choice, he has persuaded himself that all women are pretty much alike. That in point of capacity, disposition, and knowledge, he has but drawn the common lot, with the balance in his favour, of strong affection and unsullied virtue. He hardly ever sees his fine library, which is the object of her supreme aversion, but wastes his days in listless idleness, and his evenings at cards, the only thing in which she takes a lively interest.—His fine mind is, I fear, growing mean and disingenuous. The gentleness of his temper leads him not only to sacrifice his peace, but to infringe on his veracity in order to keep her quiet.

'All the entertainment he finds at dinner, is a recapitulation of the faults of her maids, or the impertinence of her footmen, or the negligence of her gardener. If to please her he joins in the censure, she turns suddenly about, and defends them. If he vindicates them, she insists on their immediate dismission; and no sooner are they irrevocably discharged, than she is continually dwelling on their perfection, and then it is only their successors who have any faults.

He is now so afraid of her driving out his few remaining old servants, if she sees his partiality for them, that in order to conceal it, he affects to reprimand them as the only means for them to secure her favour. Thus the integrity of his heart is giving way to a petty duplicity, and the openness of his temper to shabby artifices. He could submit to the loss of his comfort, but sensibly feels the diminution of his credit. The loss of his usefulness too is a constant source of regret. She will not even suffer him to act as a magistrate, lest her doors should be beset with vagabonds, and her house dirtied by men of business. If he chance to commend a dish he has tasted at a friend's house—Yes, every body's things are good but her's—she can never please; he had better always dine abroad, if nothing is fit to be eaten at home.

'Though poor Stanhope's conduct is so correct, and his attachment to his wife so notorious, he never ventures to commend any thing that is said or done by another woman. She has, indeed, no definite object of jealousy, but feels an uneasy, vague sensation of envy at any thing or person he admires. I believe she would be jealous of a fine day, if her husband praised it.

'If a tale reaches her ears of a wife who has failed of her duty, or if the public papers record a divorce, then she awakens her husband to a sense of his superior happiness, and her own irreproachable virtue. O Charles, the woman who, reposing on the laurels of her boasted virtue, allows herself to be a disobliging, a peevish, a gloomy, a discontented companion, defeats one great end of the institution, which is happiness. The wife who violates the marriage vow, is indeed more criminal; but the very magnitude of her crime emancipates her husband; while she who makes him not dishonourable, but wretched,

fastens on him a misery for life, from which no laws can free him, and under which religion alone can support him.'

We continued talking till we reached home, on the multitude of marriages in which the parties are 'joined, not matched,' and where the term *union* is a miserable misnomer. I endeavoured to turn all these new acquaintances to account, and considered myself at every visit I made, as taking a lesson for my own conduct. I beheld the miscarriages of others, not only with concern for the individual, but as beacons to light me on the way. It was no breach of charity to use the aberrations of my acquaintance for the purpose of making my own course more direct. I took care, however, never to lose sight of the humbling consideration that my own deviations were equally liable to become the object of their animadversion, if the same motive had led them to the same scrutiny.

I remained some weeks longer in town indulging myself in all its safe sights, and all its sober pleasures. I examined whatever was new in art, or curious in science. I found out the best pictures, saw the best statues, explored the best museums, heard the best speakers in the courts of law, the best preachers in the church, and the best orators in parliament; attended the best lectures, and visited the best company, in the most correct, though not always the most fashionable sense of the term. I associated with many learned, sensible, and some pious men, commodities with which London, with all its faults abounds, perhaps, more than any other place on the habitable globe. I became acquainted with many agreeable, well-informed valuable women, with a few who even seemed in a good measure to live above the world while they were living in it.

There is a large class of excellent female characters, who, on account of that very excellence, are little known, because to be known is not their object. Their ambition has a better taste. They pass through life honoured and respected in their own small, but not unimportant sphere, and approved by him, 'whose they are, and whom they serve,' though their faces are hardly known in promiscuous society. If they occasion little sensation abroad, they produce much happiness at home. And when once a woman who has all 'appliances and means to get it,' *can* withstand the intoxication of the flatterer, and the adoration of the fashionable; *can* conquer the fondness for public distinction, *can* resist the temptations of that magic circle to which she is courted, and in which she is qualified to shine—this is indeed a trial of firmness; a trial in which those who have never been called to resist themselves, can hardly judge of the merit of resistance in others.

These are the women who bless, dignify, and truly adorn society. The painter indeed does not make his fortune by their sitting to him; the jeweller is neither brought into vogue by furnishing their diamonds, nor undone by not being paid for them; the prosperity of the milliner does not depend on affixing their name to a cap or a colour; the poet does not celebrate them; the novelist does not dedicate to them; but they possess the affection of their husbands, the attachment of their children, the esteem of the wise and good, and, above all, they possess *his* favour, 'whom to know is life eternal.' Among these I doubt not I might have found objects highly deserving of my heart, but the injunction of my father was a sort of panoply which guarded it.

I am persuaded that such women compose a larger portion of the sex than is generally allowed. It is not the number, but the noise which makes a sensation, and a set of fair dependent young creatures who are every night forced, some of them reluctantly, upon the public eye; and a bevy of faded matrons rouged and repaired for an ungrateful public, dead to their blandishments, do not compose the whole female world! I repeat it—a hundred amiable women, who are living in the quiet practice of their duties, and the modest exertion of their talents, do not fill the public eye, or reach the public ear, like one aspiring leader, who, hungering for observation, and disdaining censure, dreads not abuse, but oblivion: who thinks it more glorious to head a little phalanx of fashionable followers, than to hold out, as from her commanding eminence, and imposing talents she might have done, a shining example of all that is great, and good, and dignified in woman. These self-appointed queens maintain an absolute but ephemeral empire over that little *fantastic aristocracy* which they call the world—Admiration besets them, crowds attend them, conquests follow them, inferiors imitate them, rivals envy them, newspapers extol them, sonnets deify them. A few ostentatious charities are opposed as a large atonement for a *few amiable weaknesses*, while the unpaid tradesman is exposed to ruin by their vengeance, if he refuse to trust them, and to a gaol if he continue to do it.

CHAP. XI.

THE three days previous to my leaving London were passed with Sir John and Lady Belfield. Knowing I was on the wing for Hampshire they promised to make their long intended visit to Stanley Grove during my stay there.

On the first of these days we were agreeably surprised at the appearance of Dr. Barlow, an old friend of Sir John, and the excellent Rector of Mr. Stanley's parish.—Being obliged to come to town on urgent business for a couple of days, he was charged to assure me of the cordial welcome which awaited me at the Grove. I was glad to make this early acquaintance with this highly respectable divine. I made a thousand inquiries about his neighbours, and expressed my impatience to know more of a family, in whose characters I already felt a more than common interest.

'Sir,' said he, 'if you set me talking of Mr. Stanley, you must abide by the consequences of your indiscretion, and bear with the loquacity of which that subject never fails to make me guilty. He is a greater blessing to me as a friend, and to my parish as an example and a benefactor than I can describe. I assured him that he could not be too minute in speaking of a man,

whom I had been early taught to admire, by that exact judge of merit, my late father.

'Mr. Stanley,' said the worthy Doctor, 'is about six and forty; his admirable wife is about six or seven years younger. He passed the early part of his life in London, in the best society. His commerce with the world, was to a mind like his, all pure gain: for he brought away from it all the good it had to give, without exchanging for it one particle of his own integrity. He acquired the air, manners, and sentiments of a gentleman, without any sacrifice of his sincerity. Indeed he may be said to have turned his knowledge of the world to a religious account, for it has enabled him to recommend religion to those who do not like it well enough to forgive, for its sake, the least awkwardness of gesture, or inelegance of manner.

'When I became acquainted with the family,' continued he, 'I told Mrs. Stanley that I was afraid her husband hurt religion in one sense, as much as he recommended it in another; for that some men who would forgive him his piety for the sake of his agreeableness, would be led to dislike religion more than ever in other men, in whom the jewel was not so well set. 'We should like your religious men well enough,' will they say, 'if they all resembled Stanley.'—Whereas, the truth is, they do not so much *like* Mr. Stanley's religion as *bear* with it for the pleasure which his other qualities afford them. She assured me, that this was not altogether the case, for that his other qualities having pioneer'd his way, and hewed down the prejudices which the reputation of piety naturally raises, his endeavours to be useful to them were much facilitated, and he not only kept the ground he had gained, but was often able to turn this influence over his friends to a better account than they had intended. He converted their admiration of him into arms against their own errors.

'He possesses, in perfection,' continued Dr. Barlow, 'that sure criterion of abilities, a great power over the minds of his acquaintance, and has in a high degree that rare talent, the art of conciliation without the aid of flattery. I have seen more men brought over to his opinion by a management derived from his knowledge of mankind, and by a principle which forbade his ever using this knowledge but for good purposes, than I ever observed in any other instance; and this without the slightest deviation from his scrupulous probity.

'He is master of one great advantage in conversation, that of not only knowing *what* to say that may be useful, but exactly *when* to say it; in knowing when to press a point and when to forbear; in his sparing the self-love of a vain man, whom he wishes to reclaim by contriving to make him feel himself wrong without making him appear ridiculous. The former he knows is easily pardoned, the latter never. He has studied the human heart long enough to know that to wound pride is not the way to cure, but to inflame it; and that exasperating self-conceit, will never subdue it. He seldom, I believe, goes into company without an earnest desire to be useful to some one in it; but if circumstances are adverse; if the *mollia tempora fandi* does not present itself, he knows he should lose more than they would gain, by trying to make the occasion when he does not find it. And I have often heard him say, that when he cannot benefit others, or be benefitted by them, he endeavours to benefit himself by the disappointment, which does his own mind as much good by humbling him with the sense of his own uselessness, as the subject he wished to have introduced might have done them.

'The death of his only son, about six years ago, who had just entered his eighth year, is the only interruption his family have had to a felicity so unbroken, that I told Mr. Stanley some such calamity was necessary to convince him that he was not to be put off with so poor a portion as this world has to give. I added, that I should have been tempted to doubt his being in the favour of God, if he had totally escaped chastisement. A circumstance which to many parents would have greatly aggravated the blow, rather lightened it to him. The boy, had he lived to be of age, was to have had a large independent fortune from a distant relation, which will now go to a remote branch, unless there should be another son. 'This wealth,' said he to me, 'might have proved the boy's snare, and this independence his destruction. He who does all things well, has afflicted the parents, but he has saved the child.' The loss of an only son, however, sat heavy on his heart; but it was the means of enabling him to glorify God by his submission, I should rather say by his acquiescence. Submission is only yielding to what we cannot help. Acquiescence is a more sublime kind of resignation. It is a conviction that the divine will is holy, just, and good. He one day said to me, 'We were too fond of the mercy, but not sufficiently grateful for it. We loved him so passionately that we might have forgotten who bestowed him. To preserve us from this temptation, God in great mercy withdrew him. Let us turn our eyes from the one blessing we have lost, to the countless mercies which are continued to us, and especially to the hand which confers them; to the hand which, if we continue to murmur, may strip us of our remaining blessings.'

'I cannot,' continued Dr. Barlow, 'make a higher eulogium of Mrs. Stanley than to say, that she is every way worthy of the husband whose happiness she makes. They have a large family of lovely daughters of all ages. Lucilla, the eldest, is near nineteen; you would think me too poetical were I to say she adorns every virtue with every grace; and yet I should only speak the simple truth. Phœbe, who is just turned of fifteen, has not less vivacity and sweetness than her sister, but, from her extreme naivete and warm-heartedness, she has somewhat less discretion; and her father says, that her education has afforded him not less pleasure, but more trouble, for the branches shot so fast as to call for more pruning.'

Before I had time to thank the good Doctor for his interesting little narrative, a loud rap announced company. It was Lady Bab Lawless. With her usual versatility she plunged at once into every subject with every body. She talked to Lady Belfield of the news and her nursery, of poetry, with Sir John, of politics with

me, and religion with Dr. Barlow. She talked well upon most of these points, and not ill upon any of them: for she had the talent of embellishing subjects of which she knew but little, and a kind of conjectural sagacity and rash dexterity, which prevented her from appearing ignorant, even when she knew nothing. She thought that a full confidence in her own powers was the sure way to raise them in the estimation of others, and it generally succeeded.

Turning suddenly to Lady Belfield, she said, 'Pray, my dear, look at my flowers.' 'They are beautiful roses, indeed,' said Lady Belfield, 'and as exquisitely exact as if they were artificial.'—'Which in truth they are,' replied Lady Bab. 'Your mistake is a high compliment to them, but not higher than they deserve. Look especially at these roses in my cap. You positively shall go and get some at the same place.'—'Indeed,' said Lady Belfield, 'I am thinking of laying aside flowers, though my children are hardly old enough to take them.' 'What affectation!' replied Lady Bab; 'why you are not above two or three and thirty; I am almost as old again, and yet I don't think of giving up flowers to my children, or my grand-children, who will be soon wanting them. Indeed, I only now wear *white* roses.' I discovered by this, that white roses made the same approximation to sobriety in dress, that three tables made to it in cards. 'Seriously though,' continued Lady Bab, 'you must and shall go and buy some of Fanny's flowers. I need only tell you, it will be the greatest charity you ever did, and then I know you won't rest till you have been. A beautiful girl maintains her dying mother by making and selling flowers. 'Here is her direction,' throwing a card on the table.—'Oh no, this is not it. I have forgot the name, but it is within two doors of your hair-dresser, in what d'ye call the lane, just out of Oxford street. It is a poor miserable hole, but her roses are as bright as if they grew in the gardens of Armida.' She now rung the bell violently, saying she had overstayed her time, though she had not been in the house ten minutes.

Next morning I attended Lady Belfield to the exhibition. In driving home through one of the narrow passages near Oxford-street, I observed that we were in the street where the poor flower-maker lived. Lady Belfield directed her footman to inquire for the house. We went into it, and in a small but clean room, up three pair of stairs, we found a very pretty and very genteel young girl at work on her gay manufacture. The young woman presented her elegant performances with an air of uncommon grace and modesty.

She was the more interesting because the delicacy of her appearance seemed to proceed from ill health, and a tear stood in her eye while she exhibited her works. 'You do not seem well, my dear,' said Lady Belfield, with a kindness which was natural to her. 'I never care about my own health, Madam,' replied she, 'but I fear my dear mother is dying.' She stopped, and the tears which she had endeavoured to restrain now flowed plentifully down her cheeks. 'Where is your mother, child?' said Lady Belfield. 'In the next room, Madam.' 'Let us see her,' said her Ladyship, 'if it won't too much disturb her.' So saying, she led the way, and I followed her.

We found the sick woman lying on a little poor, but clean bed, pale and emaciated, but she did not seem so near her end, as Fanny's affection had made her apprehend. After some kind expressions of concern, Lady Belfield inquired into their circumstances, which she found were deplorable. 'But for that dear girl, Madam, I should have perished with want, said the good woman; 'since our misfortunes I have had nothing to support me but what she earns by making these flowers. She has ruined her own health, by sitting up the greatest part of the night to procure me necessaries, while she herself lives on a crust.'

I was so affected with this scene, that I drew Lady Belfield into the next room: 'If we cannot preserve the mother, at least let us save the daughter from destruction,' said I; 'you may command my purse.'—'I was thinking of the same thing,' she replied. 'Pray, my good girl, what sort of education have you had?'—'O, Madam,' said she, 'one much too high for my situation. But my parents, intending to qualify me for a governness, as the safest way of providing for me, have had me taught every thing necessary for that employment. I have had the best masters, and I hope I have not misemployed my time.'—'How comes it then,' said I, 'that you were not placed out in some family?'—'What, Sir! and leave my dear mother helpless and forlorn? I had rather live only on my tea and dry bread, which, indeed I have done for many months, and supply her little wants, than enjoy all the luxuries in the world at a distance from her.'

'What were your misfortunes occasioned by?' said I, while Lady Belfield was talking with the mother. 'One trouble followed another, Sir,' said she, 'but what most completely ruined us, and sent my father to prison, and brought a paralytic stroke on my mother, was his being arrested for a debt of seven hundred pounds. This sum, which he had promised to pay, was long due to him for laces, and to my mother for milliuary and fancy dresses, from a lady who has not paid it to this moment, and my father is dead, and my mother dying! this sum would have saved them both!'

She was turning away to conceal the excess of her grief, when a venerable clergyman entered the room. It was the rector of the parish who came frequently to administer spiritual consolation to the poor woman. Lady Belfield knew him slightly, and highly respected his character. She took him aside and questioned him as to the disposition and conduct of these people, especially the young woman. His testimony was highly satisfactory. The girl, he said, had not only had an excellent education, but her understanding and principles were equally good. He added, that he reckoned her beauty among her misfortunes. It made good people afraid to take her into the house, and exposed her to danger from those of the opposite description.

I put my purse into Lady Belfield's hands, declining to make any present myself, lest after

the remark he had just made, I should incur the suspicions of the worthy clergyman.

We promised to call again the next day, and took our leave, but not till we had possessed ourselves of as many flowers as she could spare. I begged that we might stop and send some medical assistance to the sick woman, for though it was evident that all relief was hopeless, yet it would be a comfort to the affectionate girl's heart to know that nothing was omitted which might restore her mother

CHAP. XII.

In the evening we talked over our little adventure with Sir John, who entered warmly into the distresses of Fanny, and was inclined to adopt our opinion, that if her character and attainments stood the test of a strict inquiry, she might hereafter probably be transplanted into their family as governess. We were interrupted in the formation of this plan by a visit from Lady Melbury, the acknowledged queen of beauty and of ton. I had long been acquainted with her character, for her charms and her accomplishments were the theme of every man of fashion, and the envy of every modish woman.

She is one of those admired but pitiable characters, who, sent by Providence as an example to their sex, degrade themselves into a warning. —Warm-hearted, feeling, liberal on the one hand; on the other vain, sentimental, romantic, extravagantly addicted to dissipation and expense, and with that union of contrarieties which distinguishes her, equally devoted to poetry and gaming, to liberality and injustice. She is too handsome to be envious, and too generous to have any relish for detraction, but she gives to excess into the opposite fault. As Lady Denham can detect blemishes in the most perfect, Lady Melbury finds perfections in the most depraved. From a judgment which cannot discriminate, a temper which will not censure, and a hunger for popularity, which can feed on the coarsest applause, she flatters egregiously and universally, on the principle of being paid back usuriously in the same coin. Prodigal of her beauty, she exists but on the homage paid to it from the drawing-room at St. James's to the mob at an election. Candour in her is as mischievous as calumny in others, for it buoys up characters which ought to sink. Not content with being blind to the bad qualities of her favourites, she invents good ones for them, and you would suppose her corrupt 'little senate' was a choir of seraphims.

A recent circumstance related by Sir John was quite characteristical. Her favourite maid was dangerously ill, and earnestly begged to see her lady who always had loaded her with favours. To all company she talked of the virtues of the poor Toinette, for whom she not only expressed but felt real compassion. Instead of one apothecary who would have sufficed, two physicians were sent for; and she herself resolved to go up and visit her, as soon as she had finished setting to music an elegy on the death of her Java Sparrow. Just as she had completed it, she received a fresh entreaty to see her maid, and was actually got to the door in order to go up stairs, when the milliner came in with such a distracting variety of beautiful new things, that there was no possibility of letting them go till she had tried every thing on, one after the other. This took up no little time. To determine which she should keep and which return, where all was so attractive, took up still more. After numberless vicissitudes and fluctuations of racking thought, it was at length decided she should take the whole. The milliner withdrew; the lady went up—Toinette had just expired.

I found her manners no less fascinating than her person. With all her modish graces, there was a tincture of romance and an appearance of softness and sensibility which gave her the variety of two characters. She was the enchanting woman of fashion, and the elegiac muse.

Lady Belfield had taken care to cover her work table with Fanny's flowers, with a view to attract any chance visitor. Lady Melbury admired them excessively. 'You must do more than admire them,' said Lady Belfield, 'you must buy and recommend.' She then told her the affecting scene we had witnessed, and described the amiable girl who supported the dying mother by making these flowers. 'It is quite enchanting,' continued she, resolving to attack Lady Melbury in her own sentimental way, 'to see the sweet girl twisting rose buds, and forming hyacinths into bouquets.' 'Dear, how charming!' exclaimed Lady Melbury; 'it is really quite touching. I will make a subscription for her, and write at the head of the list a melting description of her case. She shall bring me all her flowers and as many more as she can make. But no, we will make a party, and go and see her. You shall carry me. How interesting to see a beautiful creature making roses and hyacinths! her delicate hands and fair complexion must be amazingly set off by the contrast of the bright flowers. If it were a coarse looking girl, spinning hemp, to be sure one should pity her, but it would not be half so moving. It will be delightful. I will call on you to-morrow, exactly at two, and carry you all. Perhaps,' whispered she to Lady Belfield, 'I may work up the circumstance into a sonnet. Do think of a striking title for it. On second thoughts, the sonnet shall be sent about with the subscription, and I'll get a pretty vignette to suit it.'

'The fine creature,' said Sir John, in an accent of compassion, as she went out, 'was made for nobler purposes. How grievously does she fall short of the high expectations her early youth had raised! Oh! what a sad return does she make to Providence for his rich and varied bounties! Vain of her beauty, lavish of her money, careless of her reputation; associating with the worst company, yet formed for the best; living on the adulation of parasites, whose understanding she despises! I grieve to compare what she is with what she might have been, had she married a man of spirit, who would prudently have guided and tenderly have restrained her. He has ruined her and himself by his indifference and easiness of temper. Satisfied

with knowing how much she is admired and be envied, he never thought of reproving or restricting her. He is proud of her, but has no particular delight in her company; and trusting to her honour, lets her follow her own devices, while he follows his. She is a striking instance of the eccentricity of that bounty which springs from mere sympathy and feeling. Her charity requires stage effect; objects that have novelty, and circumstances which, as Mr. Bayes says, 'elevate and surprise.' She lost, when an infant, her mother, a woman of sense and piety; who, had she lived, would have formed the ductile mind of the daughter, turned her various talents into other channels, and raised her character to the elevation it was meant to reach.'

'How melancholy a consideration is it,' said I, 'that so superior a woman should live so much below her high destination! She is doubtless utterly destitute of any thought of religion.'

'You are much mistaken,' replied Sir John, 'I will not indeed venture to pronounce that she entertains much *thought* about it; but she by no means denies its truths, nor neglects occasionally to exhibit its outward and visible signs. She has yet not completely forgotten

All that the nurse and all the priest have taught.

I do not think that, like Lady Denham, she considers it as a commutation, but she preserves it as a habit. A religious exercise, however, never interferes with a worldly one. They are taken up in succession, but with this distinction, the worldly business is to be done, the religious one is not altogether to be left undone. She has a moral chemistry which excels in the amalgamation of contradictory ingredients. On a Sunday, at Melbury castle, if by any strange accident she and her lord happen to be there together, she first reads him a sermon, and plays at cribbage with him the rest of the evening. In town one Sunday when she had a cold, she wrote a tract on the sacrament, for her maids, and then set up all night at deep play. She declared if she had been successful she would have given her winnings to charity; but as she lost some hundreds, she said, she could now with a safe conscience borrow that sum from her charity purse, which she had hoped to add to it, to pay her debt of honour.'

Next day, within two hours of her appointed time, she came, and was complimented by Sir John, on her punctuality. 'Indeed,' said she, 'I am rather late, but I met with such a fascinating German novel, that it positively chained me to my bed till past three. I assure you I never lost time by not rising. In the course of a few winters I have exhausted half Hookman's catalogue, before some of my acquaintance are awake, or myself out of bed.'

We soon stopped at the humble door of which we were in search. Sir John conducted Lady Melbury up the little winding stairs. I assisted Lady Belfield. We reached the room, where Fanny was just finishing a beautiful bunch of jonquils. 'How picturesque,' whispered Lady Melbury to me—'Do lend me your pencil; I must take a sketch of that sweet girl with the jonquils in her hand. My dear creature,' continued she, 'you must not only let me have these, but you must make me twelve dozen more flowers as fast as possible, and be sure let me have a great many sprigs of jessamine and myrtle. Then snatching up a wreath of various coloured geraniums—'I must try this on my head by the glass.' So saying, she run into an adjoining room, the door of which was open; Lady Belfield having before stolen into it to speak to the poor invalid.

As soon as Lady Melbury got into the room, she uttered a loud shriek. Sir John and I ran in, and were shocked to find her near fainting. 'Oh, Belfield,' said she, 'this is a trick, and a most cruel one! Why did you not tell me where you were bringing me? Why did you not tell me the people's name?'—'I have never heard it myself,' said Sir John; 'on my honour I do not understand you.—You know as much of the woman as I know,' said Lady Belfield. 'Alas! much more,' cried she, as fast as her tears would give her leave to speak. She retired to the window for air, wringing her hands, and calling for a glass of water to keep her from fainting. I turned to the sick woman for an explanation; I saw her countenance much changed.

'This, Sir,' said she, 'is the lady, whose debt of seven hundred pounds ruined me, and was the death of my husband.' I was thunderstruck, but went to assist Lady Melbury, who implored Sir John to go home with her instantly, saying her coach should come back for us. 'But, dear Lady Belfield, do lend me twenty guineas, I have not a shilling about me.'—'Then, my dear Lady Melbury,' said Lady Belfield, 'how *could* you order twelve dozen expensive flowers?' 'Oh,' said she, 'I did not mean to have paid for them till next year.' 'And how,' replied Lady Belfield, 'could the debt which was not to have been paid for a twelvemonth have relieved the pressing wants of a creature, who must pay ready money for her materials? However, as you are distressed, we will contrive to do without your money.' 'I would pawn my diamond necklace directly,' returned she, but speaking lower, 'to own the truth, it is already in the jeweller's hands, and I wear a paste necklace of the same form.'

Sir John knowing I had been at my banker's that morning, gave me such a significant look, as restrained my hand, which was already on my pocket-book. In great seeming anguish she gave Sir John her hand, who conducted her to her coach. As he was leading her down stairs, she solemnly declared she would never again run in debt, never order more things than she wanted, and above all would never play while she lived. She was miserable because she durst not ask Lord Melbury to pay this woman, he having already given her money three times for the purpose, which she had lost at faro. Then retracting, she protested, if ever she *did* touch a card again, it should be for the sole purpose of getting something to discharge this debt. Sir John earnestly conjured her not to lay 'that flattering unction to her soul,' but to convert the present vexation into an occasion of felicity, by making it the memorable and happy era of abandoning a practice, which injured her fortune, her fame, her principles, and her peace. 'Poor thing,' said Sir John, when he repeated to us,

Each will recant
Vows made in pain, as violent and void.

'In an interval of weeping, she told me,' added he, 'that she was to be at the opera to-night. To the opera, faro will succeed, and to-morrow probably the diamond ear-rings will go to Grey's in pursuit of the necklace.'

Lady Belfield inquired of Fanny how it happened that Lady Melbury, who talked with *her* without surprise or emotion, discovered so much of both at the bare sight of her mother. The girl explained this by saying, that she had never been in the way while they lived in Bond-street, when her Ladyship used to come, having been always employed in an upper room, or attending her master.

Before we parted, effectual measures were taken for the comfortable subsistence of the sick mother, and for alleviating the sorrows, and lightening the labours of the daughter; and next morning I set out on my journey for Stanley Grove, Sir John and Lady Belfield promising to follow me in a few weeks.

* * * * * * *
* * * * * * *

As soon as I got into my post-chaise, and fairly turned my back on London, I fell into a variety of reflections on the persons with whom I had been living. In this soliloquy, I was particularly struck with that descrepancy of characters, all of which are yet included under the broad comprehensive appellation of *Christians*. I found that though all differed widely from each other, they differed still more widely from that rule by which they professed to walk. Yet not one of these characters was considered as disreputable. There was not one that was profane or profligate. Not one who would not in conversation have defended Christianity if its truth had been attacked. Not one who derided or even neglected its forms; and who in her own class would not have passed for religious. Yet how little had any one of them adorned the profession she adopted! Of Mrs. Ranby, Mrs. Fentham, Lady Bab Lawless, Lady Denham, Lady Melbury, which of them would not have been startled had her Christianity been called in question? Yet how merely speculative was the religion of even the most serious among them! How superficial, or inconsistent, or mistaken, or hollow, or hypocritical, or self-deceiving was that of all the others! Had either of them been asked from what source she drew her religion, she would indignantly have answered, from the bible. Yet if we compare the copy with the model, the Christian with Christianity, how little can we trace the resemblance! In what particular did their lives imitate the life of Him *who pleased not himself*, who *did the will of his Father*: who *went about doing good*? How irreconcileable is their faith with the principles which He taught! How dissimilar their practice with the precepts He delivered! How inconsistent their lives with the example which he bequeathed! How unfounded their hope of heaven, if an entrance into heaven be restricted to those who are *like minded with Christ!*

CHAP. XIII

My father had been in early life intimately connected with the family of Mr. Stanley. Though this gentleman was his junior by several years, yet there subsisted between them such a similarity of tastes, sentiments, views and principles, that they lived in the closest friendship; and both their families having in the early part of their lives resided in London, the occasions of that thorough mutual knowledge that grows out of familiar intercourse, were much facilitated. I remembered Mr. Stanley, when I was a very little boy, paying an annual visit to my father at the Priory, and I had retained an imperfect but pleasing impression of his countenance and engaging manners.

Having had a large estate left him in Hampshire, he settled there on his marriage; an intercourse of letters had kept up the mutual attachment between him and my father. On the death of each parent, I had received a cordial invitation to come and soothe my sorrows in his society. My father enjoined me that one of my first visits after his death should be to the Grove; and, in truth, I now considered my Hampshire engagement as the *bonne bouche* of my southern excursion.

I reached Stanley Grove before dinner. I found a spacious mansion, suited to the ample fortune and liberal spirit of its possessor, I was highly gratified with the fine forest scenery in the approach to the park. The house had a noble appearance without; and within it was at once commodious and elegant. It stood on the south side of a hill, nearer the bottom than the summit, and was sheltered on the north-east by a fine old wood. The park, though it was not very extensive, was striking from the beautiful inequality of the ground, which was richly clothed with the most picturesque oaks I ever saw, interspered with stately beeches. The grounds were laid out in good taste, but though the hand of modern improvement was visible, the owner had in one instance spared

'The obsolete prolixity of shade,'

for which the most interesting of poets so pathetically pleads. The post's plea had saved the avenue.

I was cordially welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Stanley; and by that powerful and instantaneous impression which fine sense and good breeding, joined to high previous veneration of character, produce on the feelings of the guest, I at once felt myself at home. All the preliminaries of gradual acquaintance were in a manner superseded, and I soon experienced that warm and affectionate esteem, which seemed scarcely to require intercourse to strengthen, or time to confirm it. Mr. Stanley had only a few minutes to present me to his lady and two lovely daughters, before we were summoned to dinner, to which a considerable party had been invited; for the neighbourhood was populous and rather polished.

The conversation after dinner was rational, animated, and instructive. I observed that Mr. Stanley lost no opportunity which fairly offered,

for suggesting useful reflections. But what chiefly struck me in his manner of conversing was, that without ever pressing religion unseasonably into the service, he had the talent of making the most ordinary topics subservient to instruction, and of extracting some profitable hint, or striking out some important light, from subjects which in ordinary hands would have been unproductive of improvement. It was evident that piety was the predominating principle of his mind, and that he was consulting its interests as carefully when prudence made him forbear to press it, as when propriety allowed him to introduce it. This piety was rather visible in the sentiment than the phrase. He was of opinion that bad taste could never advance the interests of Christianity. And he gave less offence to worldly men, than most religious people I have known, because though he would on no human consideration, abate one atom of zeal, or lower any doctrine, nor disguise any truth, nor palliate, nor trim, nor compromise, yet he never contended for words or trifling distinctions. He thought it detracted from no man's piety to bring all his elegance of expression, his correctness of taste, and his accuracy of reasoning to the service of that cause, which lies the nearest to the heart of every Christian, and demands the best exertion of his best faculties.

He was also forward to promote subjects of practical use in the affairs of common life suited to the several circumstances and pursuits of his guests. But he particularly rejoiced that there was so broad, and safe, and unenclosed a field as general literature. This, he observed, always supplies men of education with an ample refuge from all vulgar, and dangerous, and unproductive topics. 'If we cannot,' said he, 'by friendly intercourse, always raise our principles, we may always keep our understandings in exercise; and those authors who supply so peaceable a creature as man, with subjects of elegant and innocent discussion, I do not reckon among the lowest benefactors of mankind.'

In my further acquaintance with Mr. Stanley, I have sometimes observed with what address he has converted a merely moral passage to a religious purpose. I have known him, when conversing with a man who would not have relished a more sacred authority, seize on a sentiment in Tully's Offices, for the lowest degree in his scale of morals, and then, gradually ascending, trace and exalt the same thought through Paley or Johnson, or Addison, or Bacon, till he has unexpectedly landed his opponent in the pure ethics of the gospel, and surprised him into the adoption of a Christian principle.

As I had heard there was a fine little flock of children, I was surprised, and almost disappointed every time the door opened, not to see them appear, for I had already began to take an interest in all that related to this most engaging family. The ladies having, to our gratification, sat longer than is usual at most tables, at length obeyed the signal of the mistress of the house. They withdrew, followed by the Miss Stanleys,

> With grace
> Which won who saw to wish their stay.

After their departure, the conversation was not changed. There was no occasion; it could not become more rational, and we did not desire that it should become less pure. Mrs. Stanley and her fair friends had taken their share in it with a good sense and delicacy which raised the tone of our society; and we did not give them to understand by a loud laugh before they were out of hearing, that we rejoiced in being emancipated from the restraint of their presence.

Mrs. Stanley is a graceful and elegant woman. Among a thousand other excellencies, she is distinguished for her judgment in adapting her discourse to the character of her guests, and for being singularly skilful in selecting her topics of conversation. I never saw a lady who possessed the talent of diffusing at her table so much pleasure to those around her without the smallest deviation from her own dignified purity. She asks such questions as strangers may be likely to gain, at least not to lose credit by answering: and she suits her interrogations to the kind of knowledge they may be supposed likely to possess. By this, two ends are answered: while she gives her guest an occasion of appearing to advantage, she puts herself in the way of gaining some information. From want of this discernment, I have known ladies ask a gentleman just arrived from the East-Indies, questions about America; and others, from the absence of that true delicacy, which, where it exists, shows itself on the smallest occasions, who have inquired of a person, how he liked such a book, though she knew that in the nature of things, there was no probability of his ever having heard of it; thus assuming an ungenerous superiority herself, and mortifying another by a sense of his own comparative ignorance. If there is any one at table, who, from his station, has least claim to attention, he is sure to be treated with particular kindness by Mrs. Stanley, and the diffident never fail to be encouraged, and the modest to be brought forward, by the kindness and refinement of her attentions.

When we were summoned to the drawing room I was delighted to see four beautiful children, fresh as health, and gay as youth could make them, busily engaged with the ladies. One was romping; another singing; a third was showing some drawings of birds, the natural history of which she seemed to understand; a fourth had spread a dissected map on the carpet, and had pulled down her eldest sister on thy floor to show her Copenhagen. It was an animating scene. I could have devoured the sweet creatures. I got credit with the little singer by helping her to a line which she had forgotten, and with the geographer by my superior acquaintance with the shores of the Baltic.

In the evening, when the company had left us, I asked Mrs. Stanley how she came so far to deviate from established custom as not to produce her children immediately after dinner? 'You must ask me,' said Mr. Stanley, smiling, for it was I who first ventured to suggest this bold innovation. I love my children fondly, but my children I have always at home; I have my friends but seldom; and I do not choose that any portion of the time that I wish to dedicate

to intellectual and social enjoyment should be broken in upon by another, and an interfering pleasure, which I have always within my reach. At the same time I like my children to see my friends. Company amuses, improves, and polishes them. I therefore consulted with Mrs. Stanley, how we could so manage, as to enjoy our friends without locking up our children. She recommended this expedient. The time, she said, spent by the ladies from their leaving the dining-room till the gentlemen came in to tea, was often a little heavy, it was rather an interval of anticipation than of enjoyment; those ladies who had not much *mind*, had soon exhausted their admiration of each others' worked muslins, and lace sleeves, and those who *had*, would be glad to rest it so agreeably. She therefore proposed to enliven that dull period by introducing the children.

'This little change has not only succeeded in our own family, but has been adopted by many of our neighbours. For ourselves, it has answered a double purpose. It not only delights the little things, but it delights them with less injury than the usual season of their appearance. Our children have always as much fruit as they like after their own dinner; they do not therefore want or desire the fruits, the sweetmeats, the cakes and the wine with which the guests, in order to please mamma, are too apt to cram them. Besides, poor little dears, it mixes too much selfishness with the natural delight that they have in seeing company, by connecting with it the idea of the good things they shall get. But by this alteration, we do all in our power to infuse a little disinterestedness into the pleasure they have in coming to us. We love them too tenderly to crib their little enjoyments, so we give them two pleasures instead of one, for they have their desert and our company in succession.'

Though I do not approve of too great familiarity with servants, yet I think that to an old and faithful domestic, superior consideration is due. My attendant on my present tour had lived in our family from his youth, and had the care of me before I can remember. His fidelity and good sense, and I may add his piety, had obtained for him the privilege of free speaking. 'Oh, Sir,' said he, when he came to attend me next morning, 'we are got into the right house at last.—Such a family! so godly! so sober! so charitable! 'Tis all of a piece here, Sir, Mrs. Comfit, the housekeeper, tells me that her master and mistress are the example of all the rich, and the refuge of all the poor in the neighbourhood. And as to Miss Lucilla, if the blessing of them that are ready to perish can send any body to heaven, she will go there sure enough.'

This rhapsody of honest Edwards warmed my heart, and put me in mind, that I had neglected to enquire after this worthy housekeeper, who had lived with my grand-father, and was at his death transplanted into the family of Mr. Stanley. I paid a visit, the first opportunity, to the good woman in her room, eager to learn more of a family who so much resembled my own parents, and for whom I had already conceived something more tender than mere respect.

I congratulated Mrs. Comfit on the happiness of living in so valuable a family. In return, she was even eloquent in their praises. 'Her mistress,' she said, 'was a pattern for ladies, so strict, and yet so kind! but now indeed Miss Lucilla has taken almost all the family cares from her mamma. The day she was sixteen, Sir, that is about two years and a half ago, she began to inspect the household affairs a little, and as her knowledge increased, she took more and more upon her. Miss Phœbe will very soon be old enough to relieve her sister; but my mistress won't let her daughters have any thing to do with family affairs, till they are almost women grown, both for fear it should take them off from their learning, and also give them a low turn about eating and caring for niceties, and lead them into vulgar gossip and familiarity with servants. It is time enough, she says, when their characters are a little formed; they will then gain all the good, and escape all the danger.'

Seeing me listen with the most eager and delighted attention, the worthy woman proceeded. 'In summer, Sir, Miss Stanley rises at six, and spends two hours in her closet, which is stored with the best books. At eight she consults me on the state of provisions, and other family matters, and gives me a bill of fare, subject to the inspection of her mamma. The cook has great pleasure in acting under her direction, because she allows that Miss understands when things are well done, and never finds fault in the wrong place; which, she says, is a great mortification in serving ignorant ladies, who praise or find fault by chance: not according to the cook's performance, but their own humour. She looks over my accounts every week, which being kept so short give her but little trouble; and once a month she settles every thing with her mother.

''Tis a pleasure, Sir, to see how skilful she is in accounts! One can't impose upon her a farthing if one would; and yet she is so mild and so reasonable! and so quick at distinguishing what are mistakes, and what are wilful faults! Then she is so compassionate! It will be a heart-breaking day at the Grove, Sir, whenever Miss marries.—When my master is sick, she writes his letters, reads to him, and assists her mamma in nursing him.

'After her morning's work, Sir, does she come into company, tired and cross, as ladies do who have done nothing, or are but just up? No, she comes in to make breakfast for her parents, as fresh as a rose, and as gay as a lark. An hour after breakfast, she and my master read some learned books together. She then assists in teaching her little sisters, and never were children better instructed. One day in the week, she sets aside both for them and herself to work for the poor, whom she also regularly visits at their own cottages, two evenings in the week; for she says it would be troublesome and look ostentatious to have her father's doors crowded with poor people; neither could she get at their wants and their characters half so well as by going herself to their own houses. My dear mistress has given her a small room as a store-house for clothing and books for her indigent neighbours. In this room each of the younger daughters, the day she is seven years old, has her own drawer,

with her name written on it; and almost the only competition among them is, whose shall be soonest filled with caps, aprons, and handkerchiefs. The working day is commonly concluded by one of these charitable visits. The dear creatures are loaded with their little work baskets, crammed with necessaries. This, Sir, is the day,—and it is always looked forward to with pleasure by them all. Even little Celia, the youngest, who is but just turned of five, will come to me and beg for something good to put in her basket for poor Mary or Betty such a one. I wonder I do not see any thing of the little darlings; it is about the time they used to pay me a visit.

'On Sundays before church they attend the village school; when the week's pocket money, which has been carefully hoarded for the purpose, is produced for rewards to the most deserving scholars. And yet, Sir, with all this, you may be in the house a month without hearing a word of the matter; it is all done so quietly; and when they meet at their meals they are more cheerful and gay than if they had been ever so idle.'

Here Mrs. Comfit stopped, for just then two sweet little cherry cheeked figures presented themselves at the door, swinging a straw basket between them, and crying out in a little begging voice, 'Pray Mrs. Comfit bestow your charity,—we want something coarse for the hungry, and something nice for the sick,—poor Dame Alice and her little grand daughter!' They were going on, but spying me, they coloured up to the ears, and ran away as fast as they could, though I did all in my power to detain them.

CHAP. XIV.

When Miss Stanley came in to make breakfast, she beautifully exemplified the worthy house-keeper's description. I have sometimes seen young women, whose simplicity was destitute of elegance, and others in whom a too elaborate polish had nearly effaced their native graces: Lucilla appeared to unite the simplicity of nature to the refinement of good breeding. It was thus she struck me at first sight. I forbore to form a decided opinion, till I had leisure to observe whether her mind fulfilled all that her looks promised.

Lucilla Stanley is rather perfectly elegant than perfectly beautiful. I have seen women as striking, but I never saw one so interesting. Her beauty is countenance: it is the stamp of mind intelligibly printed on the face. It is not so much the symmetry of features, as the joint triumph of intellect and sweet temper. A fine old poet has well described her:

> Her pure and eloquent blood
> Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
> That one could almost say her body thought.

Her conversation, like her countenance, is compounded of liveliness, sensibility, and delicacy. She does not say things to be quoted, but the effect of her conversation is, that it leaves an impression of pleasure on the mind, and a love of goodness on the heart. She enlivens without dazzling, and entertains without overpowering. Contented to please, she has no ambition to shine.—There is nothing like effort in her expression, or vanity in her manner. She has rather a playful gaiety than a pointed wit. Of repartee she has little, and dislikes it in others: yet I have seldom met with a truer taste for inoffensive wit. Taste is indeed the predominating quality of her mind; and she may rather be said to be a nice judge of the genius of others, than to be a genius herself. She has a quick perception of whatever is beautiful or defective in composition or in character. The same true taste pervades her writing, her conversation, her dress, her domestic arrangements, and her gardening, for which last she has both a passion and a talent. Though she has a correct ear, she neither sings nor plays; and her taste is so exact in drawing, that she really seems to have *le compass dans l'œuil;* yet I never saw a pencil in her fingers, except to sketch a seat or a bower for the pleasure ground.—Her notions are too just to allow her to be satisfied with mediocrity in many things, and for perfection in any thing, she thinks that life is too short, and its duties too various and important. Having five younger sisters to assist, has induced her to neglect some acquisitions which she would have liked. Had she been an only daughter, she owns that she would have indulged a little more in the garnish and decoration of life.

At her early age, the soundness of her judgment on persons and things cannot be derived from experience; she owes it to a *tact* so fine as to enable her to seize on the strong feature, the prominent circumstance, the leading point, instead of confusing her mind and dissipating her attention, on the inferior parts of a character, a book, or a business. This justness of thinking teaches her to rate things according to their worth, and to arrange them according to their place. Her manner of speaking adds to the effect of her words, and the tone of her voice expresses with singular felicity, gaiety or kindness as her feelings direct, and the occasion demands. This manner is so natural, and her sentiments spring so spontaneously from the occasion, that it is obvious that display is never in her head, nor an eagerness for praise in her heart. I never heard her utter a word which I could have wished unsaid, or a sentiment I would have wished unthought.

As to her dress it reminds me of what Dr. Johnson once said to an acquaintance of mine, of a lady who was celebrated for dressing well. 'The best evidence that I can give you of her perfection in this respect is, that one can never remember what she had on.' The dress of Lucilla is not neglected, and it is not studied. She is as neat as the strictest delicacy *demands*, and as fashionable as the strictest delicacy *permits;* and her nymph-like form does not appear to less advantage for being veiled with scrupulous modesty.

Oh! if women in general knew what was their real interest! if they could guess with what a charm even the *appearance* of modesty invests its possessor, they would dress decorously from mere self-love, if not from principle. The designing would assume modesty as an artifice,

the coquet adopt it as an allurement, the pure as her appropriate attraction, and the voluptuous as the most infallible art of seduction.

What I admire in Miss Stanley, and what I have sometimes regretted the want of in some other women is, that I am told she is so lively, so playful, so desirous of amusing her father and mother when alone, that they are seldom so gay as in their family party. It is then that her talents are all unfolded, and that her liveliness is without restraint. She was rather silent the two or three first days after my arrival, yet it was evidently not the silence of reserve or inattention, but of delicate propriety. Her gentle frankness and undesigning temper gradually got the better of this little shyness, and she soon began to treat me as the son of her father's friend. I very early found that though a stranger might behold her without admiration, it was impossible to converse with her with indifference. Before I had been a week at the Grove, my precautions vanished, my panoply was gone, and yet I had not consulted Mr. Stanley.

In contemplating the captivating figure, and the delicate mind of this charming girl, I felt that imagination which misleads so many youthful hearts had preserved mine. The image my fancy had framed, and which had been suggested by Milton's heroine, had been refined indeed, but it had not been romantic. I had early formed an ideal standard in my mind; too high, perhaps; but its very elevation had rescued me from the common dangers attending the society of the sex. I was continually comparing the women with whom I conversed with the fair conception which filled my mind. The comparison might be unfair to them: I am sure it was not unfavourable to myself, for it preserved me from the fascination of mere personal beauty, the allurements of factitious character, and the attractions of ordinary merit.

I am aware that love is apt to throw a radiance around the being it prefers, till it becomes dazzled, less, perhaps, with the brightness of the object itself, than with the beams with which imagination has invested it. But religion, though it had not subdued my imagination, had chastised it. It had sobered the splendours of fancy, without obscuring them. It had not extinguished the passions, but it had taught me to regulate them. I now seemed to have found the being of whom I had been in search. My mind felt her excellences, my heart acknowledged its conqueror. I struggled, however, not to abandon myself to its impulses. I endeavoured to keep my own feelings in order, till I had time to appreciate a character, which appeared as artless as it was correct. And I did not allow myself to make this slight sketch of Lucilla, and of the effect she produced on my heart, till more intimate acquaintance had justified my prepossession.

But let me not forget that Mr. Stanley had another daughter. If Lucilla's character is more elevated, Phœbe's is not less amiable. Her face is equally handsome, but her figure is somewhat less delicate. She has a fine temper, and strong virtues. The little faults she has, seem to flow from the excess of her good qualities. Her susceptibility is extreme, and to guide and guard it, finds employment for her mother's fondness, and her father's prudence. Her heart overflows with gratitude for the smallest service. This warmth of her tenderness keeps her affections in more lively exercise than her judgment; it leads her to over-rate the merit of those she loves, and to estimate their excellences, less by their own worth than by their kindness to her. She soon behaved to me with the most engaging frankness, and her innocent vivacity encouraged, in turn, that affectionate freedom with which one treats a beloved sister.

The other children are gay, lovely, interesting, and sweet tempered. Their several acquisitions, for I detest the term *accomplishments*, since it has been warped from the true meaning in which Milton used it, seem to be so many individual contributions brought in to enrich the common stock of domestic delight. Their talents are never put into exercise by artificial excitements. Habitual industry, quiet exertion, successive employments, affectionate intercourse, and gay and animated relaxation make up the round of their cheerful day.

I could not forbear admiring in this happy family the graceful union of piety with cheerfulness; strictness of principle embellished, but never relaxed, by gaiety of manners; a gaiety, not such as requires turbulent pleasures to stimulate it, but evidently the serene, yet animated result of well-regulated minds; of minds actuated by a tenderness of conscience, habitually alive to the perception of the smallest sin, and kindling into holy gratitude at the smallest mercy.

I often called to mind that my father, in order to prevent my being deceived, and run away with by persons who appeared lively at first sight, had early accustomed me to discriminate carefully, whether it was not the *animal* only that was lively, and the man dull. I have found this caution of no small use in my observations on the other sex. I had frequently remarked, that the musical and the dancing ladies, and those who were most admired for modish attainments, had little *intellectual* gaiety. In numerous instances I found that the mind was the only part which was not kept in action; and no wonder, for it was the only part which had received no previous forming, no preparatory moulding.

When I mentioned this to Mr. Stanley, 'the education,' replied he, 'which now prevails, is a Mahometan education. It consists entirely in making woman an object of attraction. There are, however, a few reasonable people left, who, while they retain the object, improve upon the plan. They too would make woman attractive; but it is by sedulously labouring to make the understanding, the temper, the mind, and the manners, of their daughters as engaging as these Circassian parents endeavour to make the person.

CHAP. XV

The friendly rector frequently visited at Stanley Grove, and for my father's sake, honoured me with his particular kindness. Dr. Barlow

filled up all my ideas of a country clergyman of the higher class. There is an uniform consistency runs through his whole life and character, which often brings to my mind, allowing for the revolution in habits that almost two hundred years have necessarily produced, the incomparable *country parson* of the ingenious Mr. George Herbert.*

'I never saw *zeal without innovation*,' said Mr. Stanley, 'more exemplified than in Barlow. His piety is as enlightened as it is sincere. No errors in religion escape him through ignorance of their existence, or through carelessness in their detection, or through inactivity in opposing them. He is too honest not to attack the prevailing evil, whatever shape it may assume; too correct to excite in the wise any fears that his zeal may mislead his judgment, and too upright to be afraid of the censures which active piety must ever have to encounter from the worldly and the indifferent, from cold hearts and unfurnished heads.

'From his affectionate warmth, however, and his unremitting application, arising from the vast importance he attaches to the worth of souls, the man of the world might honour him with the title of enthusiast; while his prudence, sober-mindedness, and regularity, would draw on him from the fanatic, the appellation of formalist. Though he is far from being 'content to *dwell* in decencies,' he is careful never to neglect them. He is a clergyman all the week as well as on Sunday; for he says, if he did not spend much of the intermediate time in pastoral visits, there could not be kept up that mutual intercourse of kindness which so much facilitates his own labours, and his people's improvement. They listen to him because they love him, and they understand him, because he has familiarized them by private discourse to the great truths which he delivers from the pulpit.

Dr. Barlow has greatly diminished the growth of innovation in his parishes, by attacking the innovator with his own weapons. Not indeed by stooping to the same disorderly practices, but by opposing an enlightened earnestness to an eccentric earnestness; a zeal *with* knowledge to a zeal *without* it. He is of opinion that activity does more good than invective, and that the latter is too often resorted to, because it is the cheaper substitute.

'His charity, however, is large, and his spirit truly catholic. He honours all his truly pious brethren, who are earnest in doing good, though they may differ from him as to the manner of doing it. Yet his candour never intrenches on his firmness; and while he will not dispute with others about shades of difference, he maintains his own opinions with the steadiness of one who embraced them on the fullest conviction.

'He is a 'scholar, and being a good ripe one,' it sets him above aiming at the paltry reputation to be acquired by those false embellishments of style, those difficult and uncommon words, and that laboured inversion of sentences, by which some injudicious clergymen make themselves unacceptable to the higher, and unintelligible to the lower, and of course, the larger part of their audience. He always bears in mind that the common people are not foolish, they are only ignorant. To meet the one he preaches good sense, to suit the other, plain language. But while he seldom shoots over the heads of the uninformed, he never offends the judicious. He considers the advice of Polonius to his son to be as applicable to preachers as to travellers—

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.

In his pulpit he is no wrangling polemic, but a genuine Bible Christian, deeply impressed himself, with the momentous truths he so earnestly presses upon others. His mind is so imbued, so saturated, if I may hazard the expression, with scriptural knowledge, that from that rich storehouse, he is ever ready to bring forth *treasures, new and old*, and to apply them wisely, temperately, and seasonably.

'Though he carefully inculcates universal holiness in all his discourses, yet his practical instructions are constantly deduced from those fundamental principles of Christianity which are the root, and life, and spirit of all goodness. Next to a solid piety, and a deep acquaintance with the Bible, he considers it of prime importance to a clergyman to be thoroughly acquainted with human nature in general, and with the state of his own parish in particular. The knowledge of both will alone preserve him from preaching too personally so as to hurt, or too generally so as not to touch.

'He is careful not to hurry over the prayers in so cold, inattentive, and careless a manner, as to make the audience suspect he is saving himself, that he may make a greater figure in delivering the sermon. Instead of this, the devout, reverential, and impressive manner in which he pronounces the various parts of the Liturgy, best prepares his own heart, and the hearts of his people, to receive benefit from his discourse. His petitions are delivered with such sober fervour, his exhortations with such humble dignity, his thanksgivings with such holy animation as carry the soul of the hearer along with him. When he ascends the pulpit, he never throws the liturgical service into the back ground by a long elaborate composition of his own, delivered with superior force and emphasis. And he pronounces the Lord's prayer with a solemnity which shows that he recollects its importance and its author.

'In preaching, he is careful to be distinctly heard, even by his remotest auditors, and by constant attention to this important article, he has brought his voice, which was not strong, to be particularly audible. He affixes so much importance to a distinct delivery, that he smilingly told me, he suspected the grammatical definition

* See Herbert's Country Parson, under the heads of the parson in his house, the parson praying, the parson preaching, the parson comforting, the parson's church, the parson catechising, the parson in mirth, &c. &c. The term parson has now, indeed, a vulgar and disrespectful sound, but in Herbert's time it was used in its true sense, *persona ecclesiæ*. I would recommend to those who have not seen it, this sketch of the ancient clerical life. As Mr. Herbert was a man of quality, he knew what became the more opulent of his function; as he was eminently pious, he practised all that he recommended. 'This appellation of parson,' says Judge Blackstone, 'however depreciated by clownish and familiar use, is the most legal, most beneficial, and most honourable title which a parish priest can enjoy.—*Vide Blackstone's Commentaries.*

of a substantive was originally meant for a clergyman, whose great object it was, if possible, *to be seen*, but indispensibly to be *heard, felt and understood.*

'His whole performance is distinguished by a grave and majestic simplicity, as far removed from the careless reader of a common story, as from the declamation of an actor. His hearers leave the church not so much in raptures with the preacher, as affected with the truths he has delivered. He says, he always finds he has done most good when he has been least praised, and that he feels most humbled when he receives the warmest commendation, because men generally extol most the sermons which have probed them least; whereas those which really do good, being often such as make them most uneasy, are consequently the least likely to attract panegyric.—'*They* only bear true testimony to the excellence of a discourse,' added he, 'not who commend the composition or the delivery, but they who are led by it to examine their own hearts, to search out its corruptions and to reform their lives. Reformation is the flattery I covet.'

'He is aware that the generality of hearers like to retire from a sermon with the comfortable belief, that little is to be done on *their* parts. Such hearers he always disappoints, by leaving on their minds at the close some impressive precept, deduced from, and growing out of, the preparatory doctrine. He does not press any one truth to the exclusion of all others. He proposes no subtilties, but labours to excite seriousness, to alarm the careless, to quicken the supine, to comfirm the doubting. He presses eternal things as things near at hand; as things in which every living man has an equal interest.'

Mr. Stanley says, that 'though Dr. Barlow was considered at Cambridge as a correct young man, who carefully avoided vice and even irregularity, yet being cheerful, and addicted to good society, he had a disposition to innocent conviviality, which might, unsuspectedly, have led him into the errors he abhorred. He was struck with a passage in a letter from Dr. Johnson to a young man who had just taken orders, in which, among other wholesome counsel, he advises him 'to acquire the courage to refuse *sometimes* invitations to dinner.' It is inconceivable what a degree of force and independence his mind acquired by the occasional adoption of this single hint. 'He is not only,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'the spiritual director, but the father, the counsellor, the arbitrator, and the friend of those whom Providence has placed under his instruction.

'He is happy in an excellent wife, who, by bringing him a considerable fortune, has greatly enlarged his power of doing good. But still more essentially has she increased his happiness, and raised his character by her piety and prudence. By the large part she takes in his affairs, he is enabled to give himself wholly up to the duties of his profession. She is as attentive to the bodies, as her husband is to the souls of his people, and educates her own family as sedulously as he instructs his parish.

'One day when I had been congratulating Dr. Barlow on the excellence of his wife's character, the conversation fell by a sudden transition, on the celibacy of the Roman clergy. He smiled and said, 'Let us ministers of the Reformation be careful never to provoke the people to wish for the restoration of that part of popery. I often reflect how peculiarly incumbent it is on us, to select such partners as shall never cause our emancipation from the old restrictions to be regretted. And we ourselves ought, by improving the character of our wives, to repay the debt we owe to the ecclesiastical laws of protestantism for the privilege of possessing them.'

'Will it be thought too trifling to add, how carefully this valuable pair carry their consistency into the most minute details of their family arrangements? Their daughters are no less patterns of decorum and modesty in their dress and appearance, than in the more important parts of their conduct. The Doctor says, that the most distant and inconsiderable appendages to the temple of God, should have something of purity and decency. Besides,' added he, 'with what face could I censure improprieties from the pulpit, if the appearance of my own family in the pew below were to set my precepts at defiance, by giving an example of extravagance and vanity to the parish, and thus by making the preacher ridiculous, make his expostulations worse than ineffectual?'

'So conscientious a rector,' added Mr. Stanley, 'could not fail to be particularly careful in the choice of a curate; and a more humble, pious, diligent assistant than Mr. Jackson could not easily be found. He is always a welcome guest at my table. But this valuable man, who was about as good a judge of the world as the great Hooker, made just such another indiscreet marriage. He was drawn in to choose his wife, the daughter of a poor tradesman in the next town, because he concluded that a woman bred in humble and active life, would necessarily be humble and active herself. *Her* reason for accepting *him* was because she thought that as every clergyman was a *gentleman*, she of course, as his wife, should be a *gentlewoman*, and fit company for any body.

'He instructs my parish admirably,' said Dr. Barlow, 'but his own little family he cannot manage. His wife is continually reproaching him, that though he may know the way to heaven, he does not know how to push his way in the world. His daughter is the finest lady in the parish, and outdoes them all, not only in the extremity, but the immodesty of the fashion. It is her mother's great ambition that she should excel the Miss Stanley's and my daughters in music, while her good father's linen betrays sad marks of negligence. I once ventured to tell Mrs. Jackson, that there was only one reason which could excuse the education she had given her daughter, which was, that I presumed she intended to qualify her for getting her bread; and that if she would correct the improprieties of the girl's dress, and get her instructed in useful knowledge, I would look out for a good situation for her. This roused her indignation. She refused my offer with scorn, saying, that when she asked my charity, she would take my advice; and desired I would

member that one clergyman's daughter was as good as another. I told her that there was indeed a sense in which one clergyman was as good as another, because the profession dignified the lowest of the order, if, like her husband, he was a credit to that order. Yet still there were gradations in the church as well as in the state. But between the *wives* and *daughters* of the higher and lower clergy, there was the same distinction which riches and poverty have established between those of the higher and lower orders of the laity; and that rank and independence in the one case confer the same outward superiority with rank and independence in the other.'

CHAP. XVI.

Among the visiters at Stanley Grove, there was a family of ladies, who, though not particularly brilliant, were singularly engaging from their modesty, gentleness, and good sense. One day when they had just left us, Mr. Stanley obliged me with the following little relation: Mrs. Stanley and Lucilla only being present.

'Lady Aston has been a widow almost seven years. On the death of Sir George, she retired into this neighbourhood with her daughters, the eldest of whom is about the age of Lucilla. She herself had a pious but a very narrow education. Her excessive grief for the loss of her husband augmented her natural love of retirement, which she cultivated, not to the purpose of improvement, but to indulgence of melancholy. Soon after she settled here, we heard how much good she did, and in how exemplary a manner she lived, before we saw her. She was not very easy of access even to us; and after we had made our way to her, we were the only visiters she admitted for a long time. We soon learnt to admire her deadness to the world, and her unaffected humility. Our esteem for her increased with our closer intercourse, which, however, enabled us also to observe some considerable mistakes in her judgment, especially in the mode in which she was training up her daughters.—These errors we regretted, and with all possible tenderness ventured to point out to her. The girls were the prettiest demure little nuns you ever saw, mute and timid, cheerless and inactive, but kind, good and gentle.

'Their pious mother, who was naturally of a fearful and doubting mind, had had this pensive turn increased by several early domestic losses, which, even previous to Sir George's death, had contributed to fix something of a too tender and hopeless melancholy on her whole character. There are two refuges for the afflicted; two diametrically opposite ways of getting out of sorrow—religion and the world. Lady Aston had wisely chosen the former. But her scrupulous spirit had made the narrow way narrower than religion required. She read the scriptures diligently, and she prayed over them devoutly; but she had no judicious friend to direct her in these important studies. As your Mrs. Ranby attended only to the doctrines, and our friend Lady Belfield trusted indefinitely to the promises, so poor Lady Aston's broken spirit was too exclusively carried to dwell on the threatenings; together with the rigid performance of those duties which she earnestly hoped might enable her to escape them. This round of duty, of watchfulness and prayer, she invariably performed with almost the sanctity of an Apostle, but with a little too much of the scrupulosity of an ascetic. While too many are rejoicing with unfounded confidence in those animating passages of scripture, which the tenor of their lives demonstrates not to belong to them, she trembled at those denunciations which she could not fairly apply to herself. And the promises from which she might have derived reasonable consolation, she overlooked as designed for others.

'Her piety, though sincere, was a little tinctured with superstition. If any petty strictness was omitted, she tormented herself with causeless remorse. If any little rule was broken, she repaired the failure with treble diligence the following day; and laboured to retrieve her perplexed accounts with the comfortless anxiety of a person who is working out a heavy debt. I endeavoured to convince her, that an inferior duty which clashed with one of a higher order might be safely postponed at least, if not omitted.

'A diary has been found useful to many pious Christians, as a record of their sins, and of their mercies. But this poor lady spent so much time in weighing the offences of one day against those of another, that before the scruple was settled, the time for action was past. She brought herself into so much perplexity by reading over this journal of her infirmities, that her difficulties were augmented by the very means she had employed to remove them; and her conscience was disturbed by the method she had taken to quiet it. This plan, however, though distressing to a troubled mind, is wholesome to one of a contrary cast.

'*My* family, as you have seen, are rather exact in the distribution of their time, but we do not distress ourselves at interruptions which are unavoidable: but *her* arrangements were carried on with a rigour which made her consider the smallest deviation as a sin that required severe repentance. Her alms were expiations, her self-denial penances. She was rather a disciple of the mortified Baptist, than of the merciful Redeemer. Her devotions were sincere, but discouraging. They consisted much in contrition, but little in praise; much in sorrow for sin, but little in hope of its pardon. She did not sufficiently cast her care and confidence on the great propitiation. She firmly believed all that her Saviour had done and suffered, but she had not the comfort of practically appropriating the sacrifice. While she was painfully working out her salvation with fear and trembling, she indulged the most unfounded apprehensions of the divine displeasure. At Aston Hall the Almighty was literally feared, but he was not glorified. It was the obedience of a slave, not the reverential affection of a child.

'When I saw her denying herself and her daughters the most innocent enjoyments, and suspecting sin in the most lawful indulgences,

I took the liberty to tell her how little acceptable uncommanded austerities and arbitrary impositions were to the God of mercies. I observed to her, that the world, that human life, that our own sins and weaknesses found us daily and hourly occasions of exercising patience and self-denial; that life is not entirely made up of great evils or heavy trials, but that the perpetual recurrence of petty evils and small trials is the ordinary and appointed exercise of the Christian graces. To bear with the failings of those about us, with their infirmities, their bad judgment, their ill-breeding, their perverse tempers; to endure neglect where we feel we have deserved attention, and ingratitude where we expected thanks; to bear with the company of disagreeable people, whom Providence has placed in our way, and whom He has perhaps provided on purpose for the trial of our virtue: these are the best exercises; and the better, because not chosen by ourselves. To bear with vexations in business, with disappointments in our expectations, with interruptions of our retirement, with folly, intrusion, disturbance, in short, with whatever opposes our will and contradicts our humour; this habitual acquiescence appears to be more of the essence of self denial than any little rigours or inflictions of our own imposing. These constant, inevitable, but inferior evils, properly improved, furnish a good moral discipline, and might well, in the days of ignorance, have superseded pilgrimage and penance. It has this advantage too over the other, that it sweetens the temper and promotes humility, while the former gives rigidness instead of strength, and inflexibility instead of firmness.

'I have often thought,' said I, when Mr. Stanley made a pause, 'that we are apt to mistake our vocation by looking out of the way for occasions to exercise great and rare virtues, and by stepping over those ordinary ones which lie directly in the road before us. When we read, we fancy we could be martyrs, and when we come to act, we cannot bear even a provoking word.'

Miss Stanley looked pleased at my remark, and in a modest tone observed, that 'in no one instance did we deceive ourselves more than in fancying we could do great things well, which we were never likely to be called to do at all; while, if we were honest, we could not avoid owning how negligently we performed our own little appointed duties, and how sedulously we avoided the petty inconveniences which these duties involved.'

'By kindness,' resumed Mr. Stanley, 'we gradually gained Lady Aston's confidence, and of that confidence we have availed ourselves to give something of a new face to the family. Her daughters, good as they were dutiful, by living in a solitude unenlivened by books, and unvaried by improving company, had acquired a manner rather resembling fearfulness than delicacy. Religious they were, but they had contracted gloomy views of religion. They considered it as something that must be endured in order to avoid punishment, rather than as a principle of peace, and trust, and comfort; as a task to be gone through, rather than as a privilege to be enjoyed. They were tempted to consider the Almighty as a hard master, whom however they were resolved to serve, rather than as a gracious father, who was not only loving, but *love* in the abstract.—Their mother was afraid to encourage a cheerful look, lest it might lead to levity; or a sprightly thought for fear it might have a wrong tendency. She forgot, or rather she did not know, that young women were not formed for contemplative life. She forgot that in all our plans and operations we should still bear in mind that there are two worlds. As it is the fault of too many to leave the *next* out of their calculation, it was the error of Lady Aston, in forming the minds of her children, to leave out *this*. She justly considered heaven as their great aim and end; but neglected to qualify them for the present temporal life, on the due use and employment of which so obviously depends the happiness of that which is eternal.

'Her charities were very extensive, but of these charities her sweet daughters were not made the active dispensers, because an old servant, who governed not only the family, but her lady also, chose that office herself. Thus the bounty being made to flow in partial channels, the woman's relations and favourites almost entirely engrossing it, it did little comparative good.

'With fair understandings the Miss Astons had acquired very little knowledge: their mother's scrupulous mind found something dangerous in every author, who did not professedly write on religious subjects. If there were one exceptionable page in a book, otherwise valuable, instead of suppressing the page, she suppressed the book. And indeed, my dear Charles, grieved am I to think how few authors of the more entertaining kind we *can* consider as perfectly pure, and put without caution, restriction, or mutilation into the hands of our daughters. I am, however, of opinion, that as they will not always have their parents for tasters, and as they will every where, even in the most select libraries, meet with these mixed works, in which, though there is much to admire, yet there is something to expunge, it is the safest way to accustom them early to hear read the most unexceptionable parts of these books. Read them yourself to them without any air of mystery; tell them that what you omit is not worth reading, and then the omissions will not excite but stifle curiosity. The books to which I allude are those where the principle is sound and the tendency blameless, and where the few faults consist rather in coarseness than in corruption.

'But to return; she fancied that these inexperienced creatures, who have never tried the world, and whose young imaginations had perhaps painted it in all the brilliant colours with which erring fancy gilds the scenes it has never beheld, and the pleasure it has never tried, could renounce it as completely as herself, who had exhausted what it has to give and was weary of it. She thought they could live contentedly in their closets, without considering that she had neglected to furnish their minds with that knowledge which may make the closet a place of enjoyment, by supplying the intervals of devotional with entertaining reading.

'We carried Lucilla and Phœbe to visit them:

I believe she was a little afraid of their gay countenances. I talked to her of the necessity of literature to inform her daughters, and of pleasures to enliven them. The term pleasure alarmed her still more than that of literature. 'What pleasures were allowed to religious people? She would make her daughters as happy as she dared without offending her Maker.' I quoted the devout but liberal Hooker, who exhorts us not to regard the Almighty as a captious sophist, but as a merciful Father.

'During this conversation, we were sitting under the fine spreading oak on my lawn in front of that rich bank of flowers which you so much admire. It was a lovely evening in the end of June; the setting sun was all mild radiance, the sky all azure, the air all fragrance. —The birds were in full song. The children, sitting on the grass before us, were weaving chaplets of wild flowers.

It looked like nature in the world's first spring.

'My heart was touched with joy and gratitude. 'Look, Madam,' said I, 'at the bountiful provision which a beneficent Father makes, not only for the necessities, but for the pleasures of his children;

——————not content
With every food of life to nourish man,
He makes all nature beauty to his eye,
And music to his ear.

'These flowers are of so little apparent use, that it might be thought profuseness in any economy short of that which is divine, to gratify us at once with such forms, and such hues, and such fragrance. It is a gratification not necessary, yet exquisite, which lies somewhere between the pleasures of sense and intellect, and in a measure partakes of both. It elevates while it exhilirates, and lifts the soul from the gift to the giver. God has not left his goodness to be *inferred* from abstract speculation, from the conclusions of reason, from deduction and argument; we not only collect it from observation, but we have palpable evidences of his bounty, we feel it with our senses. Were God a hard master, might he not withhold these superfluities of goodness? Do you think he makes such rich provision for us, that we should shut our eyes and close our ears to them? Does he present such gifts with one hand, and hold in the other a stern interdict of 'touch not, taste not, handle not?' And can you believe he is less munificent in the economy of grace, than in that of nature? Do you imagine that he provides such abundant supplies for our appetites and senses here, without providing more substantial pleasures for our future enjoyment? Is not what we see a prelude to what we hope for, a pledge of what we may expect? A specimen of larger, higher, richer bounty, an encouraging cluster from the land of promise? If from his works we turn to his word, we shall find the same inexhaustible goodness exercised to still nobler purposes. Must we not hope then, even by analogy, that he has in store blessings exalted in their nature, and eternal in their duration, for all those who love and serve him in the Gospel of his Son?'

'We now got on fast. She was delighted with my wife, and grew less and less afraid of my girls. I believe, however, that we should have made a quicker progress in gaining her confidence if we had looked less happy. I suggested to her to endeavour to raise the tone of her daughters' piety, to make their habits less monastic, their tempers more cheerful, their virtues more active; to render their lives more useful, by making them the immediate instruments of her charity; to take them out of themselves, and teach them to compare their factitious distresses with real substantial misery, and to make them feel grateful for the power and the privilege of relieving it.

'As Dr. Barlow has two parishes which join, and we had pre-occupied the ground in our own, I advised them to found a school in the next, for the instruction of the young, and a friendly society for the aged of their own sex. We prevailed on them to be themselves not the nominal but the active patronesses; to take the measure of all the wants and all the merit of their immediate neighbourhood; to do every thing under the advice and superintendence of Dr. Barlow, and to make him their 'guide, philosopher, and friend.' By adopting this plan, they now see the poverty of which they only used to hear, and know personally the dependants whom they protect.

'Dr. Barlow took infinite pains to correct Lady Aston's views of religion, 'Let your notions of God' said he, 'be founded, not on your own gloomy apprehensions, and visionary imaginations, but what is revealed in his word, else the very intenseness of your feelings, the very sincerity of your devotion, may betray you into enthusiasm, into error, into superstition, into despair. Spiritual notions which are not grounded on scriptural truth, and directed and guarded by a close adherence to it, mislead tender hearts and warm imaginations. But while you rest on the sure unperverted foundation of the word of God, and pray for his Spirit to assist you in the use of his word, you will have little cause to dread that you shall fear him too much, or serve him too well. I earnestly exhort you,' continued he, 'not to take the measure of your spiritual state from circumstances which have nothing to do with it. Be not dismayed at an incidental depression which may depend on the state of your health, or your spirits, or your affairs. Look not for sensible communications. Do not consider rapturous feelings as any criterion of the favour of your Maker, nor the absence of them as any indication of his displeasure. An increasing desire to know him more, and serve him better; an increasing desire to do, and to suffer his whole will; a growing resignation to his providential dispensations, is a much surer, a much more unequivocal test.'

'I next,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'carried our worthy curate, Mr. Jackson, to visit her, and proposed that she should engage him to spend a few hours every week with the young ladies. I recommended that after he had read with them a portion of Scripture, of which he would give them a sound and plain exposition, he should convince them he had not the worse taste for being religious, by reading with them some

books of general instruction, history, travels, and polite literature. This would imbue their minds with useful knowledge, form their taste, and fill up profitably and pleasantly that time which now lay heavy on their hands; and, without intrenching on any of their duties, would qualify them to discharge them more cheerfully.

'I next suggested that they should study gardening; and that they should put themselves under the tuition of Lucilla, who is become the little Repton of the valley. To add to the interest, I requested that a fresh piece of ground might be given them, that they might not only exercise their taste, but be animated with seeing the complete effect of their own exertions; as a creation of their own would be likely to afford them more amusement, than improving on the labours of another.

'I had soon the gratification of seeing my little Carmelites, who used when they walked in the garden, to look as if they came to dig a daily portion of their own graves, now enjoying it, embellishing it, and delighted by watching its progress; and their excellent mother, who, like Spenser's Despair, used to look 'as if she never dined,' now enjoying the company of her select friends. The mother is become almost cheerful and the daughters almost gay. Their dormant faculties are awakened. Time is no longer a burden, but a blessing: the day is too short for their duties, which are performed with alacrity since they have been converted into pleasures. You will believe I did not hazard all these terrible innovations as rapidly as I recount them, but gradually, as they were able to bear it.

'This happy change in themselves has had the happiest consequences. Their friends had conceived the strongest prejudices against religion, from the gloomy garb in which they had seen it arrayed at Aston Hall. The uncle, who was also the guardian, had threatened to remove the girls before they were quite moped to death; the young baronet was actually forbidden to come home at the holidays; but now the uncle is quite reconciled to *them*, and almost to *religion*. He has resumed his fondness for the daughters; and their brother, a fine youth at Cambridge, is happy in spending his vacations with his family, to whom he is become tenderly attached. He has had his own principles and character much raised by the conversation and example of Dr. Barlow, who contrives to be at Aston Hall as much as possible when Sir George is there. He is daily expected to make his mother a visit, when I shall recommend him to your particular notice and acquaintance.'

Lucilla, blushing, said, she thought her father had too exclusively recommended the *brother* to my friendship; she would venture to say the *sisters* were equally worthy of my regard, adding, in an affectionate tone, 'they are every thing that is amiable and kind. The more you know them, Sir, the more you will admire them; for their good qualities are kept back, by the best quality of all, their modesty.' This candid and liberal praise did not sink the fair eulogist herself in my esteem.

CHAP. XVII.

I HAD now been near three weeks at the Grove. Ever since my arrival I had contracted the habit of pouring out my heart to Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, with grateful affection and filial confidence. I still continued to do it on all subjects except one.

The more I saw of Lucilla, the more difficult I found it to resist her numberless attractions. I could not persuade myself that either prudence or duty demanded that I should guard my heart against such a combination of amiable virtues and gentle graces: virtues and graces, which, as I observed before, my mind had long been combining as a delightful idea, and which I now saw realized in a form more engaging than even my own imagination had allowed itself to picture.

I did not feel courage sufficient to risk the happiness I actually enjoyed, by aspiring too suddenly to a happiness more perfect. I dared not yet avow to the parents, or the daughter, feelings, which my fears told me, might possibly be discouraged, and which, if discouraged, would at once dash to the ground a fabric of felicity that my heart, not my fancy, had erected, and which my taste, my judgment, and my principles equally approved, and delighted to contemplate.

The great critic of antiquity, in his treatise on the drama, observes that the introduction of a new person is of the next importance to a new incident. Whether the introduction of two interlocutors is equal in importance to two incidents, Aristotle has forgotten to establish. This dramatic rule was illustrated by the arrival of Sir John and Lady Belfield, who, though not new to the reader or the writer, were new at Stanley Grove.

The early friendship of the two gentlemen had suffered little diminution from absence, though their intercourse had been much interrupted; Sir John, who was a few years younger than his friend, since his marriage, having lived as entirely in the town, as Mr. Stanley had done in the country. Mrs. Stanley had indeed seen Lady Belfield a few times in Cavendish Square, but her ladyship had never before been introduced to the other inhabitants of the Grove.

The guests were received with cordial affection, and easily fell into the family habits, which they did not wish to interrupt, but from the observation of which they hoped to improve their own. They were charmed with the interesting variety of characters in the lovely young family, who in return were delighted with the politeness, kindness, and cheerfulness of their father's guests.

Shall I avow my own meanness? Cordially as I loved the Belfields, I am afraid I saw them arrive with a slight tincture of jealousy. They would, I thought, by enlarging the family circle, throw me at a farther distance from the being whom I wished to contemplate nearly. They would, by dividing her attention, diminish my proportion. I had been hitherto the sole guest, I was now to be one of several. This was the first discovery I made that love is a narrower of the heart. I tried to subdue the ungenerous

feeling, and to meet my valuable friends with a warmth adequate to that which they so kindly manifested. I found that a wrong feeling at which one has virtue enough left to blush, is seldom lasting, and shame soon expelled it.

The first day was passed in mutual inquiries and mutual communications. Lady Belfield told me that the amiable Fanny, after having wept over the grave of her mother, was removed to the house of the benevolent clergyman, who had kindly promised her an asylum, till Lady Belfield's return to town, when it was intended she should be received into her family; that worthy man and his wife having taken on themselves a full responsibility for her character and disposition, and generously promised that they would exert themselves to advance her progress in knowledge during the interval. Lady Belfield added that every inquiry respecting Fanny, whom we must now call Miss Stokes, had been attended with the most satisfactory result, her principles being as unquestionable as her talents.

After dinner I observed that whenever the door opened, Lady Belfield's eye was always turned towards it, in expectation of seeing the children. Her affectionate heart felt disappointed on finding that they did not appear, and she could not forbear whispering me, who sat next her, 'that she was afraid the piety of our good friends was a little tinctured with severity. For her part she saw no reason why religion should diminish one's affection for one's children, and rob them of their innocent pleasures.' I assured her gravely I thought so too; but forbore telling her how totally inapposite her application was to Mr. and Mrs. Stanley. She seemed glad to find me of her opinion, and gave up all hopes of seeing the 'little melancholy recluses,' as she called them, 'unless,' she said, laughing, 'she might be permitted to look at them through the grate of their cells.' I smiled, but did not undeceive her, and affected to join in her compassion. When we went to attend the ladies in the drawing room, I was delighted to find Lady Belfield sitting on a low stool, the whole gay groupe at play round her. A blush mixed itself with her good natured smile, as we interchanged a significant look. She was questioning one of the elder ones, while the youngest sat on her lap singing. Sir John entered, with that kindness and good humour so natural to him, into the sports of the others, who, though wild with health and spirits, were always gentle and docile. He had a thousand pleasant things to entertain them with. He too, it seems, had not been without his misgivings.

'Are not these poor miserable recluses?' whispered I maliciously to her Ladyship; 'and are not these rueful looks proof positive that religion diminishes our affection for our children? and is it not abridging their innocent pleasures, to give them their full range in a fresh airy apartment, instead of cramming them into an eating room, of which the air is made almost fœtid by the fumes of the dinner and a crowded table? and is it not better that they should spoil the pleasure of the company, though the mischief they do is bought by the sacrifice of their own liberty?' 'I make my *amende*,' said she, 'I never will be so forward again to suspect piety of ill nature.' 'So far from it, Caroline,' said sir John, 'that we will adopt the practice we were so forward to blame; and I shall not do it,' said he, 'more from regard to the company, than to the children, who I am sure will be gainers in point of enjoyment; liberty I perceive is to them positive pleasure, and paramount to any which our false epicurism can contrive for them.'

'Well, Charles,' said Sir John, as soon as he saw me alone, 'now tell us about this Lucilla, this paragon, this nonpariel of Dr. Barlow's. Tell me what is she? or rather what is she not?'

'First,' replied I, 'I will, as you desire, define her by negatives—she is *not* a professed beauty, she is *not* a professed genius, she is *not* a professed philosopher, she is *not* a professed wit, she is *not* a professed any thing; and, I thank my stars, she is *not* an artist!' 'Bravo, Charles; now as to what she is!' 'She is,' replied I, 'from nature—a woman, gentle, feeling, animated, modest. She is, by education, elegant, informed, enlightened. She is, from religion, pious, humble, candid, charitable.'

'What a refreshment will it be,' said sir John, 'to see a girl of fine sense, more cultivated than accomplished,—the creature, not of fiddlers and dancing masters, but of nature, of books, and of good company! If there is the same mixture of spirit and delicacy in her character, that there is of softness and animation in her countenance, she is a dangerous girl, Charles.'

'She certainly does,' said I, 'possess the essential charm of beauty where it exists; and the most effectual substitute for it, where it does not; the power of prepossessing the beholder, by her look and manner, in favour of her understanding and temper.'

This prepossession, I afterwards found confirmed, not only by her own share in the conversation, but by its effect on myself; I always feel that our intercourse unfolds not only her powers but my own. In conversing with such a woman, I am apt to fancy that I have more understanding, because her animating presence brings it more into exercise.

After breakfast, next day, the conversation happened to turn on the indispensable importance of unbounded confidence to the happiness of married persons. Mr. Stanley expressed his regret, that though it was one of the grand ingredients of domestic comfort, yet it was sometimes unavoidably prevented by an unhappy inequality of mind between the parties, by violence, or imprudence, or imbecility on one side, which almost compelled the other to a degree of reserve, as incompatible with the design of the union, as with the frankness of the individual.

'We have had an instance among our own friends,' replied Sir John, 'of this evil being produced, not by any of the faults to which you have adverted, but by an excess of misapplied sensibility, in two persons of near equality as to merit, and in both of whom the utmost purity of mind, and exactness of conduct, rendered all concealment superfluous. Our worthy friends Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton married from motives of affection, and with an high opinion of each other's merit, which their long and intimate

connection has rather contributed to exalt than to lower; and yet, now at the end of seven years, they are only beginning to be happy. They contrived to make each other as comfortable by an excess of tenderness, as some married pairs are rendered by want of it. A mistaken sensibility has intrenched not only on their comfort, but on their sincerity. Their resolution never to give each other pain, has led them to live in a constant state of petty concealment. They are neither of them remarkably healthy, and to hide from each other every little indisposition, has kept up a continual vigilance to conceal illness on the one part, and to detect it on the other, till it became a trial of skill which could make the other most unhappy; each suffering much more by suspicion when there was no occasion for it, than they could have done by the acknowledgment of slight complaints, when they actually existed.

'This valuable pair, after seven years apprenticeship to a petty martyrdom, have at last found out, that it is better to submit to the inevitable ills of life cheerfully and in concert, and to comfort each other under them cordially, than alternately to suffer and inflict the pain of perpetual disingenuousness. They have at last discovered that uninterrupted prosperity is not the lot of man.—Each is happier now with knowing that the other is sometimes sick, than they used to be with suspecting they were always so. The physician is now no longer secretly sent for to one, when the other is known to be from home. The apothecary is at last allowed to walk boldly up the public stair-case, fearless of detection.

'These amiable persons have at length attained all that was wanting to their felicity, that of each believing the other to be well, when they *say* they are so. They have found out that unreserved communication is the lawful commerce of conjugal affection, and that all concealment is contraband.'

'Surely,' said I, when Sir John had done speaking, 'it is a false compliment to the objects of our affection, if, for the sake of sparing them a transient uneasiness, we rob them of the comfort to which they are entitled, of mitigating our suffering by partaking it. All dissimulation is disloyalty to love. Besides, it appears to me to be an introduction to wider evils; and I should fear, both for the woman I loved and for myself, that if once we allowed ourselves concealment in one point, where we thought the motive excused us, we might learn to adopt it in others, where the principle was more evidently wrong.'

'Besides,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'it argues a lamentable ignorance of human life, to set out with an expectation of health without interruption, and of happiness without alloy. When young persons marry with the fairest prospects, they should never forget that infirmity is inseparably bound up with their very nature, and that in bearing one another's burthens, they fulfil one of the highest duties of the union.'

CHAP. XVIII.

After supper, when only the family party were present, the conversation turned on the unhappy effects of misguided passion. Mrs. Stanley lamented that novels, with a very few admirable exceptions, had done infinite mischief by so completely establishing the omnipotence of love, that the young reader was almost systematically taught an unresisting submission to a feeling, because the feeling was commonly represented as irresistible.

'Young ladies,' said Sir John, smiling, 'in their blind submission to this imaginary omnipotence, are apt to be necessarians. When they *fall* in love, as it is so justly called, they then obey their *fate;* but in their stout opposition to prudence and duty, they most manfully exert their *free will;* so that they want nothing but the *knowledge absolute*, of the miseries attendant on an indiscreet attachment, completely to exemplify the occupation assigned by Milton to a class of beings to whom it would not be gallant to resemble young ladies.'

Mrs. Stanley continued to assert, that ill-placed affection only became invincible, because its supposed invincibility had been first erected into a principle. She then adverted to the power of religion in subduing the passions, that of love among the rest.

I ventured to ask Lucilla, who was sitting next me, (a happiness which by some means or other, I generally contrived to enjoy,) what were her sentiments on this point? With a little confusion, she said, 'to conquer an ill-placed attachment, I conceive may be effected by motives inferior to Religion. Reason, the humbling conviction of having made an unworthy choice, for I will not resort to so bad a motive as pride, may easily accomplish it. But to conquer a well founded affection, a justifiable attachment, I should imagine, requires the powerful principle of Christian piety; and what cannot that effect?' She stopped, and blushed, as fearing she had said too much.

Lady Belfield observed, that she believed a virtuous attachment might possibly be subdued by the principle Miss Stanley had mentioned; yet she doubted if it were in the power of religion itself, to enable the heart to conquer aversion, much less to establish affection for an object for whom dislike had been entertained.

'I believe,' said Mr. Stanley, 'the example is rare, and the exertion difficult; but that which is difficult to us, is not impossible to Him who has the hearts of all men in his hand. And I am happy to resolve Lady Belfield's doubt by a case in point.

'You cannot, Sir John, have forgotten our old London acquaintance, Carlton?'—'No,' replied he, 'nor can I ever forget what I have since heard, of his ungenerous treatment to that most amiable woman, his wife. I suppose he has long ago broken her heart.'

'You know,' resumed Mr. Stanley, 'they married not only without any inclination on either side, but on her part, with something more than indifference, with a preference for another person. *She* married through an implicit obedience to her mother's will, which she had never in any instance opposed: *He*, because his father had threatened to disinherit him if he married any other woman; for as they were

distant relations, there was no other way of securing the estate in the family.'

'What a motive for a union so sacred and so indissoluble!' exclaimed I, with an ardour which raised a smile in the whole party. I asked pardon for my involuntary interruption, and Mr. Stanley proceeded.

'She had long entertained a partiality for a most deserving young clergyman, much her inferior in rank and fortune. But though her high sense of filial duty led her to sacrifice this innocent inclination, and though she resolved never to see him again, and had even prevailed on him to quit the country and settle in a distant place, yet Carlton was ungenerous and inconsistent enough to be jealous of her without loving her. He was guilty of great irregularities, while Mrs. Carlton set about acquitting herself of the duties of a wife, with the most meek and humble patience, burying her sorrows in her own bosom, and not allowing herself even the consolation of complaining.

'Among the many reasons for his dislike, her piety was the principal. He said, religion was of no use, but to disqualify people for the business of life; that it taught them to make a merit of despising their duties, and hating their relations; and that pride, ill-humour, opposition, and contempt for the rest of the world, were the meat and drink of all those who pretended to religion.

'At first she nearly sunk under his unkindness; her health declined, and her spirits failed. In this distress she applied to the only sure refuge of the unhappy, and took comfort in the consideration that her trials were appointed by a merciful Father to detach her from a world which she might have loved too fondly, had it not been thus stripped of its delights.

'When Mrs. Stanley, who was her confidential friend, expressed the tenderest sympathy in her sufferings, she meekly replied, 'Remember who are they whose robes are washed white in the kingdom of glory, *it is they who come out of great tribulation.* I endeavour to strengthen my faith with a view of what the best Christians have suffered, and my hope with meditating on the shortness of all suffering. I will confess my weakness,' added she: 'of the various motives to patience under all the ills of life, which the Bible presents, though my reason and religion acknowledges them all, there is not one that comes home so powerfully to my feelings as this,—*the time is short.*'

'Another time Mrs. Stanley, who had heard of some recent irregularities of Carlton, called upon her, and lamented the solitude to which she was often left for days together, advised her to have a female friend in her house, that her mind might not be left to prey upon itself by living so much alone. She thanked her for the kind suggestion, but said she felt it was wiser and better not to have a confidential friend always at hand, 'for of what subject should we talk,' said she, 'but of my husband's faults? Ought I to allow myself in such a practice? It would lead me to indulge a habit of complaint which I am labouring to subdue. The compassion of my friend would only sharpen my feelings which I wish to blunt. Giving vent to a flame only makes it rage the more; if suppressing cannot subdue it, at least the consciousness that I am doing my duty will enable me to support it. When we feel,' added she, 'that we are *doing* wrong, the opening of our heart, may strengthen our virtue; but when we are *suffering* wrong, the mind demands another sort of strength; it wants higher support than friendship has to impart. It pours out its sorrows in prayer with fuller confidence, knowing that he who sees can sustain; that he who hears will recompense; that he will judge, not our weakness but our effort to conquer it; not our success but our endeavours; with him endeavour is victory.

'The grace I most want,' added she, 'is humility. A partial friend, in order to support my spirits, would flatter my conduct; gratified with her soothing, I should, perhaps, not so entirely cast myself for comfort on God. Contented with human praise, I might rest in it. Besides having endured the smart, I would not willingly endure it in vain. We know who has said, 'If you suffer with me, you shall also reign with me.' It is not, however, to mere suffering that the promise is addressed, but to suffering for his sake, and in his spirit. Then turning to the Bible which lay before her, and pointing to the sublime passage of St. Paul, which she had just been reading, 'our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'—'Pray,' said she, 'read this in connection with the next verse, which is not always done. *When* is it that it works for us this weight of glory? *Only* 'while we are looking at the things which are not seen.' Do admire the beauty of this position, and how the good is weighed against the evil, like two scales differently filled; the affliction is light, and but for a moment; the glory is a *weight*, and it is for *ever*. 'Tis a feather against lead, a grain of sand against the universe, a moment against eternity. Oh! how the scale which contains this world's light trouble kicks the beam when weighed against the glory which shall be revealed.'

'At the end of two years she had a little girl; this opened to her a new scene of duties, and a fresh source of consolation. Her religion proved itself to be of the right stamp, by making her temper still more sweet, and diffusing the happiest effects through her whole character and conversation. When her husband had staid out late, or even all night, she never reproached him. When he was at home, she received his friends with as much civility as if she had liked them. He found that his house was conducted with the utmost prudence, and that while she maintained his credit at his table, her personal expenses were almost nothing; indeed, self seemed nearly annihilated in her. He sometimes felt disappointed, because he had no cause of complaint, and was angry that he had nothing to condemn.

'As he has a very fine understanding, he was the more provoked, because he could not help seeing that her blameless conduct put him continually in the wrong. All this puzzled him.—He never suspected that there was a principle,

out of which such consequences could grow, and was ready to attribute to insensibility, that patience which nothing short of Christian piety could have inspired. He had conceived of religion, as a visionary system of words and phrases, and concluded that from so unsubstantial a theory, it would be a folly to look for practical effects.

'Sometimes when he saw her nursing his child, of whom he was very fond, he was almost tempted to admire the mother, who is a most pleasing figure; and now and then, when his heart was thus softened for a moment, he would ask himself, what reasonable ground of objection there was either to her mind or person?

'Mrs. Carlton, knowing that his affairs must necessarily be embarrassed by the extraordinary expenses he had incurred, when the steward brought her usual year's allowance, she refused to take more than half, and ordered him to employ the remainder on his master's account. The faithful old man was ready to weep, and could not forbear saying, 'Madam, you could not do more for a kind husband. Besides, it is but a drop of water in the ocean.'—'That drop,' said she, 'it is my duty to contribute.' When the steward communicated this to Carlton, he was deeply affected, refused to take the money, and again was driven to resort to the wonderful principle, from which such right but difficult actions could proceed.'

Here I interrupted Mr. Stanley. 'I am quite of the steward's opinion,' said I. 'That a woman should do this, and much more for the man who loved her, and whom she loved, is quite intelligible to every being who has a heart. But for a cruel, unfeeling tyrant! I do not comprehend it. What say you, Miss Stanley?

'Under the circumstances you suppose,' said she, blushing, 'I think the woman would have no shadow of merit; her conduct would be a mere gratification, an entire indulgence of her own feelings. The triumph of affection would have been cheap: Mrs. Carlton's was the triumph of religion; of a principle which could subdue an attachment to a worthy object, and act with such generosity towards an unworthy one.'

Mr. Stanley went on. 'Mrs. Carlton frequently set up late reading such books as might qualify her for the education of her child, but always retired before she had reason to expect Mr. Carlton, lest he might construe it into upbraiding.' One night, as he was not expected to come home at all, she sat later than usual, and had indulged herself with taking her child to pass the night in her bed. With her usual earnestness she knelt down and offered up her devotions by her bed-side, and in a manner particularly solemn and affecting prayed for her husband. Her heart was deeply touched, and she dwelt on these petitions in a strain peculiarly fervent. She prayed for his welfare in both worlds, and earnestly implored that she might be made the humble instrument of his happiness. She meekly acknowledged her own many offences; of his she said nothing.

'Thinking herself secure from interruption, her petitions were uttered aloud; her voice often faltering, and her eyes streaming with tears. Little did she think that the object of her prayers was within hearing of them. He had returned home unexpectedly, and coming softly into the room, heard her pious aspirations. He was inexpressibly affected. He wept and sighed bitterly. The light from the candles on the table fell on the blooming face of his sleeping infant, and on that of his weeping wife. It was too much for him. But he had not the virtuous courage to give way to his feelings. He had not the generosity to come forward and express the admiration he felt. He withdrew unperceived and passed the remainder of the night in great perturbation of spirit. Shame, remorse, and confusion, raised such a conflict in his mind, as prevented him from closing his eyes; while she slept in quiet, and awoke in peace.

'The next morning, during a very short interview, he behaved to her with a kindness which she had never before experienced. He had not resolution to breakfast with her, but promised, with affection in his words and manner to return to dinner. The truth was, he never quitted home, but wandered about his woods to compose and strengthen his mind. This self-examination was the first he had practised; its effects were salutary.

'A day or two previous to this they had dined at our house. He had always been much addicted to the pleasures of the table. He expressed high approbation of a particular dish, and mentioned again when he got home how much he liked it. The next morning Mrs. Carlton wrote to Lucilla to beg the receipt for making this ragout; and this day, when he returned from his solitary ramble and 'compunctious visitings,' the favourite dish, most exquisitely dressed was produced at his dinner. He thanked her for this obliging attention, and turning to the butler, directed him to tell the cook that no dish was ever so well dressed. Mrs. Carlton blushed when the honest butler said, 'Sir, it was my mistress dressed it with her own hands, because she knew your honour was fond of it.'

'Tears of gratitude rushed into Carlton's eyes, and tears of joy overflowed those of the old domestic, when his master, rising from the table, tenderly embraced his wife, and declared he was unworthy of such a treasure. 'I have been guilty of a public wrong, Johnson,' said he to his servant, 'and my reparation shall be as public. I can never deserve her, but my life shall be spent in endeavouring to do so.'

'The little girl was brought in, and her presence seemed to cement this new formed union. An augmented cheerfulness on the part of Mrs. Carlton invited an increased tenderness on that of her husband. He began every day to discover new excellences in his wife, which he readily acknowledged to herself, and to the world. The conviction of her worth had gradually been producing esteem, esteem now ripened into affection, and his affection for his wife was mingled with a blind sort of admiration of that piety which had produced such effects. He now began to think home the pleasantest place, and his wife the pleasantest companion.

'A gentle censure from him on the excessive frugality of her dress, mixed with admiratio-

of the purity of its motive, was an intimation to her to be more elegant. He happened to admire a gown worn by a lady whom they had visited. She not only sent for the same materials but had it made by the same pattern. A little attention, of which he felt the delicacy.

'He not only saw, but in no long time acknowledged, that a religion which produced such admirable effects, could not be so mischievous a principle as he had supposed, nor could it be an inert principle. Her prudence has accomplished what her piety began. She always watched the turn of his eye, to see how far she might venture, and changed the discourse when the look was not encouraging. She never tired him with lectures, never intruded serious discourse unseasonably, nor prolonged it improperly. His early love of reading, which had for some years given way to more turbulent pleasures, he has resumed; and frequently insists, that the books he reads to her shall be of her own choosing. In this choice she exercises the nicest discretion, selecting such as may gently lead his mind to higher pursuits, but which at the same time are so elegantly written, as not to disgust his taste. In all this Mrs. Stanley is her friend and counsellor.

'While Mrs. Carlton is advancing her husband's relish for books of piety, he is forming her's to polite literature. She herself often proposes an amusing book, that he may not suspect her of a wish to abridge his innocent gratifications; and by this complaisance she gains more than she loses, for, not to be outdone in generosity, he often proposes some pious one in return. Thus their mutual sacrifices are mutual benefits. She has found out that he has a highly cultivated understanding, and he has discovered that she has a mind remarkably susceptible of cultivation. He has by degrees dropt most of his former associates, and has entirely renounced the diversions into which they led him. He is become a frequent and welcome visitor here. His conduct is uniformly respectable, and I look forward with hope to his becoming even a shining character. There is, however, a pertinacity, I may say a sincerity, in his temper, which somewhat keeps him back. He will never adopt any principle without the most complete conviction of his own mind; nor profess any truth, of which he himself does not actually feel the force.'

Lady Belfield, after thanking Mr. Stanley for his interesting little narrative, earnestly requested that Sir John would renew his acquaintance with Mr. Carlton, that she herself might be enabled to profit by such an affecting example of the power of genuine religion as his wife exhibited; confessing that one such living instance would weigh more with her than a hundred arguments. Mrs. Stanley obligingly promised to invite them to dinner the first leisure day.

Mr. Stanley now informed us that Sir George Aston was arrived from Cambridge on a visit to his mother and sisters; that he was a youth of great promise, whom he begged to introduce to us as a young man in whose welfare he took a lively concern, and on the right formation of whose character much would depend, as he had a large estate, and the family interest in the country would give him a very considerable influence; to this influence it was, therefore, of great importance to give a right direction. We next morning took a ride to Aston Hall, and I commenced an acquaintance with the engaging young baronet, which I doubt not, from what I saw and heard, will hereafter ripen into friendship.

CHAP. XIX.

The good rector joined the party at dinner. The conversation afterwards happened to turn on the value of human opinion, and Sir John Belfield made the hackneyed observation, that the desire of obtaining it should never be discouraged, it being highly useful as a motive of action.

'Yes,' said Dr. Barlow, 'it certainly has its uses in a world, the affairs of which must be chiefly carried on by worldly men; a world which is itself governed by low motives. But human applause is not a Christian principle of action; nay, it is so adverse to Christianity, that our Saviour himself assigns it as a powerful cause of men's not believing, or at least not confessing him, *because they loved the praise of men.* The eager desire of fame is a sort of separation line between Paganism and Christianity. The ancient philosophers have left us many shining examples of moderation in earthly things, and of the contempt of riches. So far the light of reason, and a noble self-denial carried them; and many a Christian may blush at these instances of their superiority; but of an indifference to fame, of a deadness to human applause, except as founded on a loftiness of spirit, disdain of their judges, and self-sufficient pride, I do not recollect any instance.'

'And yet,' said Sir John, 'I remember Seneca says in one of his epistles, that no man expresses such a respect and devotion to virtue, as he who forfeits the *repute* of being a good man, that he may not forfeit the *conscience* of being such.'

'They might,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'incidentally express some such sentiment, in a well turned period, to give antithesis to an expression, or weight to an apothegm; they might declaim against it in a fit of disappointment, in the burst of indignation excited by a recent loss of popularity; but I question if they ever once acted upon it. I question if Marius himself, sitting amidst the ruins of Carthage, actually felt it. Seldom, if ever, does it seem to have been inculcated as a principle, or enforced as a rule of action: nor could it.....it was 'against the canon law of their foundation.'

Sir John. 'Yet a good man struggling with adversity is, I think, represented by one of their authors, as an object worthy of the attention of the gods.'

Stanley. 'Yes—but the divine approbation alone was never proposed as the standard of right, or the reward of actions, except by divine revelation.'

'Nothing seems more difficult,' said I, 'to settle than the standard of right. Every man has a standard of his own, which he considers as of universal application. One makes his own

tastes, desires and appetites, his rule of right; another the example of certain individuals, fallible like himself; a third, and indeed the generality, the maxims, habits, and manners of the fashionable part of the world.'

Sir John. 'But since it is so difficult to discriminate between allowable indulgence and criminal conformity, the life of a conscientious man, if he be not constitutionally temperate, or habitually firm, must be poisoned with solicitude, and perpetually racked with the fear of exceeding his limits.'

Stanley. 'My dear Belfield, the peace and security of a Christian, we well know, are not left to depend on constitutional temperance, or habitual firmness. These are, as the young Numidian says,

Perfections that are placed in bones and nerves.

There is a higher and surer way to prevent the solicitude which, by correcting the principle; to get the heart set right; to be jealous over ourselves; to be careful never to venture to the edge of our lawful limits; in short, and that is the only infallible standard, to live in the conscientious practice of measuring all we say, and do, and think, by the unerring rule of God's word.'

Sir John. 'The impossibility of reaching the perfection which that rule requires, sometimes discourages well meaning men, as if the attempt were hopeless.'

Dr. Barlow. 'That is, Sir, because they take up with a kind of hearsay Christianity. Its reputed pains and penalties drive them off from inquiring for themselves. They rest on the surface.—If they would go deeper they would see that the Spirit which dictated the Scripture is a Spirit of power as well as a Spirit of promise. All that he requires us to do, he enables us to perform. He does not prescribe 'rules' without furnishing us with arms.'

In answer to some further remarks of Sir John, who spoke with due abhorrence of any instance of actual vice, but who seemed to have no just idea of its root and principle. Dr. Barlow observed: 'While every one agrees in reprobating wicked actions, few, comparatively, are aware of the natural and habitual evil which lurks in the heart. To this the Bible particularly directs our attention. In describing a bad character, it does not say that his *actions* are flagitious, but that 'God is not in all his *thoughts*.' This is the description of a thoroughly worldly man. Those who are given up completely to the world, to its maxims, its principles, its cares, or its pleasures, cannot entertain thoughts of God. And to be unmindful of his providence, to be regardless of his presence, to be insensible to his mercies, must be nearly as offensive to Him as to deny his existence. Excessive dissipation, a supreme love of money, or an entire devotedness to ambition, drinks up that spirit, swallows up that affection, exhausts that vigour, starves that zeal, with which a Christian should devote himself to serve his Maker.

'Pray observe,' continued Dr. Barlow, 'that I am not speaking of avowed profligates, but of decent characters; men who, while they are pursuing, with keen intenseness, the great objects of their attachment, do not deride or even totally neglect religious observances; yet think they do much and well, by affording some old scraps of refuse time to a few wary prayers and sleepy thoughts, from a mind worn down with engagements of pleasure, or projects of accumulation, or schemes of ambition. In all these several pursuits, there may be nothing which, to the gross perceptions of the world, would appear to be moral turpitude. The pleasure may not be profligacy, the wealth so cherished may not have been fraudulently obtained, the ambition, in human estimation, may not be dishonourable; but an alienation from God, an indifference to eternal things, a spirit incompatible with the spirit of the gospel, will be found at the bottom of all these restless pursuits.'

'I am entirely of your opinion, Doctor,' said Mr. Stanley,' 'it is taking up with something short of real Christianity; it is an apostacy from the doctrines of the Bible, it is the substitution of a spurious and popular religion, for that which was revealed from heaven; it is a departure from the faith once delivered to the saints that has so fatally sunk our morality, and given countenance to that low standard of practical virtue which prevails. If we lower the principle, if we obscure the light, if we reject, the influence, if we sully the purity, if we abridge the strictness of the divine law, there will remain no ascending power in the soul, no stirring spirit, no quickening aspiration after perfection, no stretching forward after that holiness to which the beatific vision is specifically promised. It is in vain to expect that the practice will rise higher than the principle which inspires it; that the habits will be superior to the motives which govern them.'

Dr. Barlow. 'Selfishness, security, and sensuality are predicted by our Saviour as the character of the last times. In alluding to the antediluvian world, and the cause of its destruction, eating, drinking, and marrying, could not be named in the Gospel as things censurable in themselves, they being necessary to the very existence of that world, which the abuse of them was tending to destroy. Our Saviour does not describe criminality by the excess, but by the spirit of the act. He speaks of eating, not gluttony; of drinking, not intoxication; of marriage, not licentious intercourse. This seems a plain intimation, that carrying on the transactions of the world in the spirit of the world, and that habitual deadness to the concerns of eternity, in being so alive to the pleasures or the interests of the present moment, do not indicate a state of safety, even where gross acts of vice may be rare.'

Stanley. 'It is not by a few, or even many instances of excessive wickedness that the moral state of a country is to be judged, but by a general averseness and indifference to *real* religion. A few examples of glaring impiety may furnish more subject for declamation, but are not near so deadly a symptom. It is no new remark, that more men are undone by an excessive indulgence in things permitted, than by the commission of avowed sins.'

Sir John. 'How happy are those, who, by their faith and piety are delivered from these difficulties!'

Stanley. 'My dear Belfield where are those privileged beings? It is one sad proof of human infirmity, that the best men have continually these things to struggle with. What makes the difference is, that those whom we call good men struggle on to the end, while the others, not seeing the danger do not struggle at all.'

'Christians,' said Dr. Barlow, 'who would strictly keep within the bounds prescribed by their religion, should imitate the ancient Romans, who carefully watched that their god Terminus, who defined their limits, should never recede; the first step of his retreat, they said, would be the destruction of their security.'

Sir John. 'But, Doctor, pray what remedy do you recommend against this natural, I had almost said this invincible propensity to overvalue the world? I do not mean a propensity merely to overrate its pleasures and its honours, but a disposition to yield to its domination over the mind, to indulge a too earnest desire of standing well with it, to cherish a too anxious regard for its good opinion!'

Dr. Barlow. 'The knowledge of the disease should precede the application of the remedy.—Human applause is by a worldly man reckoned not only among the luxuries of life, but among articles of the first necessity. An undue desire to obtain it, has certainly its foundation in vanity; and it is one of our grand errors to reckon vanity a trivial fault. And over estimation of character, and an anxious wish to conciliate all suffrages, is an infirmity from which even worthy men are not exempt; nay, it is a weakness from which, if they are not governed by a strict religious principle, worthy men are in most danger. Reputation being in itself so very desirable a good, those who actually possess it, and in some sense deserve to possess it, are apt to make it their standard, and to rest in it as their supreme aim and end.'

Sir John. 'You have exposed the latent principle, it remains that you suggest its cure.'

Dr. Barlow. 'I believe the most effectual remedy would be, to excite in the mind frequent thoughts of our divine Redeemer, and of *his* estimate of that world on which we so fondly set our affections, and whose approbation we are too apt to make the chief object of our ambition.'

Sir John. 'I allow it to have been necessary, that Christ in the great end which he had to accomplish, should have been poor, and neglected and contemned, and that he should have trampled on the great things of this world, human applause among the rest; but I do not conceive that this obligation extends to his followers, nor that we are called upon to partake the poverty which he preferred, or to renounce the wealth and grandeur which he set at nought, or to imitate him in making himself of no reputation.'

Dr. Barlow. 'We are not indeed called to resemble him in his external circumstances. It is not our bounden duty to be necessarily exposed to the same contempt; nor are we obliged to embrace the same ignominy. Yet it seems a natural consequence of our Christian profession, that the things which he despised, we should not venerate; the vanities he trampled on, we should not admire; the world which he censured, we ought not to idolize; the ease which he renounced, we should not rate too highly; the fame which he set at nought, we ought not anxiously to covet.—Surely the followers of him who was 'despised and rejected of men,' should not seek their highest gratification from the flattery and applause of men. The truth is, in all discourses on this subject, we are compelled continually to revert to the observation that Christianity is a religion of the *heart*. And though we are not called upon to partake the poverty and meanness of his situation, yet the precept is clear and direct, respecting the temper by which we should be governed.

'Let the same *mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' If, therefore, we happen to possess that wealth and grandeur which he disdained, we should *possess them as though we possessed them not.* We have a fair and liberal permission to use them as his gift, and to his glory, but not to erect them into the supreme objects of our attachment. In the same manner in every other point, it is still the spirit of the act, the temper of the mind to which we are to look. For instance, I do not think that I am obliged to show my faith by sacrificing my son, nor my obedience, by selling all that I have to give to the poor; but I think I am bound by the spirit of these two powerful commands, to practise a cheerful acquiescence in the whole will of God, in suffering and renouncing, as well as in doing, when I know what is really his will.'

CHAP. XX.

The pleasant reflections excited by the interesting conversation of the evening were cruelly interrupted by my faithful Edwards. 'Sir,' said he, when he came to attend me, 'do you know that all the talk of the Hall to night at supper was, that Miss Stanley is going to be married to young Lord Staunton? He is a cousin of Mrs. Carlton's, and Mrs. Stanley's coachman brought home the news from thence yesterday. I could not get at the very truth, because Mrs. Comfit was out of the way; but all the servants agree, that though he is a lord, and rich, and handsome, he is not half good enough for her. Indeed, Sir, they say he is no better than he should be.'

I was thunderstruck at this intelligence. It was a trial I had not suspected. 'Does he visit here then, Edwards,' said I, 'for I had neither seen nor heard of him.'—'No Sir,' said he, 'but Miss meets him at Mr. Carlton's.' This shocked me beyond expression. Lucilla meet a man at another house! Lucilla carry on a clandestine engagement! Can Mrs. Carlton be capable of conniving at it! Yet if it were not clandestine, why should he not visit the Grove?'

These tormenting reflections kept me awake the whole night. To acquit Lucilla, Edward's story made difficult; to condemn her, my heart found impossible. One moment I blamed my own foolish timidity, which had kept me back from making any proposal, and the next, I was glad that the delay would enable me to sift the

truth, and to probe her character. 'If I do not find consistency here,' said I, 'I shall renounce all confidence in human virtue.'

I arose early and went to indulge my meditations in the garden. I saw Mr. Stanley sitting under the favourite oak. I was instantly tempted to go and open my heart to him, but seeing a book in his hand, I feared to interrupt him; and was turning into another walk, till I had acquired more composure—He called after me, and invited me to sit down.

How violent were my fluctuations! How inconsistent were my feelings! How much at variance was my reason with my heart! The man on earth with whom I wished to confer invited me to a conference. With a mind under the dominion of a passion which I was eager to declare, yet agitated with an uncertainty which I had as much reason to fear might be painfully as pleasantly removed; I stood doubtful whether to seize or to decline the occasion which thus presented itself to me. A moment's reflection, however convinced me that the opportunity was too inviting to be neglected. My impatience for an eclaircissement on Lord Staunton's subject was too powerful to be any longer resisted.

At length with the most unfeigned diffidence, and a hesitation which I feared would render my words unintelligible, I ventured to express my tender admiration of Miss Stanley, and implored permission to address her.

My application did not seem to surprise him. He only gravely said, 'We will talk of this some future day.' This cold and laconic reply instantly sunk my spirits. I was shocked and visibly confused. 'It is too late,' said I to myself. 'Happy Lord Staunton!' He saw my distress, and taking my hand with the utmost kindness of voice and manner, said, My dear young friend, content yourself for the present with the assurance of my entire esteem and affection. This is a very early declaration. You are scarcely acquainted with Lucilla; you do not yet know,' added he, smiling, 'half her faults.'

'Only tell me, My dear Sir,' said I, a little re-assured, and grasping his hand, 'that when you know all mine, you will not reject me. Only tell me that you feel no repugnance—that you have no other views—that Miss Stanley has no other——' here I stopt, my voice failed—the excess of my emotion prevented me from finishing my sentence.—He encouragingly said, 'I know not that Lucilla has any attachment. For myself, I have no views hostile to your wishes. You have a double interest in my heart. You are endeared to me by your personal merit, and by my tender friendship for your beloved father. But be not impetuous. Form no sudden resolution. Try to assure yourself of my daughter's affection, before you ask it of her. Remain here another month as my welcome guest, as the son of my friend. Take that month to examine your own heart, and to endeavour to obtain an interest in her's; we will then resume the subject.'

'But, my dear Sir,' said I, 'is not Lord Staunton—' 'Set your heart at rest,' said he. 'Though we are both a little aristocratic in our political principles, yet when the competition is for the happiness of life, and the interests of virtue, both Lucilla and her father think with Dumont, that

'A lord
'Opposed against a man, is but a man.'

So saying, he quitted me; but with a benignity in his countenance and manner that infused not only consolation, but joy into my heart. My spirits were at once elated. To be allowed to think of Lucilla! To be permitted to attach myself to her! To be sure her heart was not engaged! To be invited to remain a month longer under the same roof with her—to see her—to hear her—to talk to her—all this was a happiness so great that I did not allow myself to repine, because it was not all I had wished to obtain.

I met Mrs. Stanley soon after. I perceived by her illuminated countenance, that my proposal had been already communicated to her. I ventured to take her hand, and with the most respectful earnestness entreated her friendship—her good offices. 'I dare not trust myself with you just now,' said she, with an affectionate smile; 'Mr. Stanley will think I abet rebellion, if through my encouragement you should violate your engagements with him. 'But,' added she, kindly pressing my hand, 'you need not be much afraid of *me*. Mr. Stanley's sentiments on this point, as on all others, are exactly my own. We have but one heart and mind, and that heart and mind are not unfavourable to your wishes.' With a tear in her eyes, and affection in her looks, she tore herself away, evidently afraid of giving way to her feelings.

I did not think myself bound by any point of honour to conceal the state of my heart from Sir John Belfield, who with his lady joined me soon after in the garden. I was astonished to find my passion for Miss Stanley was no secret to either of them.—Their penetration had left me nothing to disclose. Sir John however looked serious, and affected an air of mystery which a little alarmed me. 'I own,' said he, 'there is some danger of your success.' I eagerly enquired what he thought I had to fear?—'You have every thing to fear,' replied he in a tone of grave irony, 'which a man not four and twenty, of an honourable family, with a clear estate of four thousand a year, a person that all the ladies admire, a mind which all the men esteem, and a temper which endears you to men, women, and children, *can* fear from a little country girl, whose heart is as free as a bird, and who, if I may judge by her smiles and blushes whenever you are talking to her, would have no mortal objection to sing in the same cage with you.'

'It will be a sad dull novel however,' said Lady Belfield—'all is likely to go on so smoothly that we shall flag for want of incident. No difficulties, nor adventures to heighten the interest. No cruel step-dame, no tyrant father, no capricious mistress, no moated castle, no intriguing confidante, no treacherous spy, no formidable rival, not so much as a duel or even a challenge, I fear, to give variety to the monotonous scene.'

I mentioned Edward's report respecting Lord

Staunton, and owned how much it had disturbed me. 'That he admires her,' said Lady Belfield, 'is notorious. That his addresses have not been encouraged, I have also heard, but not from the family. As to Lucilla, she is the last girl that would ever insinuate even to me, to whom she is so unreserved, that she had rejected so great an offer. I have heard her express herself with an indignation, foreign to her general mildness, against women who are guilty of this fashionable, this dishonourable indelicacy.'

'Well, but Charles,' said Sir John, 'you must positively assume a little dejection, to diversify the business. It will give interest to your countenance, and pathos to your manner, and tenderness to your accent.—And you must forget all attentions, and neglect all civilities. And you must appear absent, and *distrait* and *revesur;* especially while your fate hangs in some suspense.—And you must read Petrarch, and repeat Tibullus, and write sonnets. And when you are spoken to, you must not listen. And you must wander in the grove by moon-shine, and talk to the Oreads, and the Dryads, and the Naiads—Oh! no, unfortunately, I am afraid there are no Naiads within hearing.—You must make the woods vocal with the name of Lucilla; luckily 'tis such a poetical name that echo won't be ashamed to repeat it. I have gone through it all, Charles, and know every high way and bye way in the map of love. I will, however, be serious for one moment, and tell you for your comfort, that though at your age I was full as much in for it as you are now, yet after ten years union, Lady Belfield has enabled me to declare

How much the wife is dearer than the bride.'

A tear glistened in her soft eyes at this tender compliment.

Just at that moment Lucilla happened to cross the lawn at a distance. At sight of her, I could not, as I pointed to her, forbear exclaiming, in the words of Sir John's favourite poet,

There doth beauty dwell,
There most conspicuous, even in outward shape,
Where dawns the high expression of a *mind.*

'This is very fine,' said Sir John, sarcastically; 'I admire all you young enthusiastic philosophers, with your intellectual refinement You pretend to be captivated only with *mind.* I observe, however, that previous to your raptures, you always take care to get this mind lodged in a fair and youthful form. This mental beauty is always prudently enshrined in some elegant corporeal frame before it is worshipped. I should be glad to see some of these intellectual adorers in love with the mind of an old or ugly woman. I never heard any of you fall into ecstacies in descanting on the mind of your grand-mother.' After some further irony, they left me to indulge my meditations, in the nature of which a single hour had made so pleasant a revolution.

CHAP. XXI.

The conversation of two men bred at the same school or college, when they happen to meet afterwards, is commonly uninteresting, not to say tiresome, to a third person, as involving local circumstances in which he has no concern. But this was not always the case since the meeting of my two friends.—Something was generally to be gained by their communications even on these unpromising topics.

At breakfast, Mr. Stanley said, 'Sir John, you will see here at dinner to morrow our old college acqaintance, Ned Tyrrel. Though he does not commonly live at the family house in this neighbourhood, but at a little place he has in Buckinghamshire, he comes among us periodically to receive his rents. He always invites himself, for his society is not the most engaging.'

'I heard,' replied Sir John, 'that he became a notorious profligate after he left Cambridge, though I have lost sight of him ever since we parted there. But I was glad to learn lately that he has become quite a reformed man.'

'He is so far reformed,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'that he is no longer grossly licentious. But in laying down the vices of youth, he has taken up successively those which he thought better suited to the successive stages of his progress. As he withdrew himself from his loose habits and connections, ambition became his governing passion; he courted public favour, thirsted for place and distinction, and laboured by certain obliquities and some little sacrifices of principle to obtain promotion. Finding it did not answer, and all his hopes failing, he now rails at ambition, wonders men will wound their consciences and renounce their peace for vain applause and 'the bubble reputation.—His sole delight at present, I hear, is in amassing money and reading controversial divinity. Avarice has supplanted ambition, just as ambition expelled profligacy.

'In the interval in which he was passing from one of these stages to the other, in a very uneasy state of mind, he dropped in by accident where a famous irregular preacher was disseminating his Antinomian doctrines. Caught by his vehement but coarse eloquence, and captivated by an alluring doctrine, which promised much while it required little, he adopted the soothing but fallacious tenet. It is true, I hear he is become a more respectable man in his conduct, but I doubt, though I have not lately seen him, if his present state may not be rather worse than his former ones.

'In the two previous stages, he was disturbed and dissatisfied. Here he has taken up his rest. Out of this strong hold it is not probable that any subsequent vice will ever drive him, or true religion draw him. He sometimes attends public worship, but as he thinks no part of it but the sermon of much value, it is only when he likes the preacher. He has little notion of the respect due to established institutions, and does not heartily like any precomposed forms of prayer, not even our incomparable Liturgy. He reads such religious books only as tend to establish his own opinions, and talks and disputes loudly on certain doctrinal points. But an accumulating Christian, and a Christian who, for the purpose of accumulation, is said to be uncharitable, and even somewhat oppressive, is a paradox which I cannot solve, and an anomaly

which I cannot comprehend. Covetousness is, as I said, a more creditable vice than Ned's former ones, but, for that very reason more dangerous.'

'From this sober vice,' said I, 'proceeded the blackest crime ever perpetrated by human wickedness: for it does not appear that Judas, in his direful treason, was instigated by malice. It is observable, that when our Saviour names this sin, it is with an emphatical warning, as knowing its mischief to be greater because its scandal was less. Not content with a single caution, he doubles his exhortation, '*Take heed* and *beware* of covetousness.'

After some remarks of Sir John which I do not recollect, Mr. Stanley said, 'I did not intend making a philippic against covetousness, a sin to which I believe no one here is addicted. Let us not, however, plume ourselves in not being guilty of a vice, to which, as we have no natural bias, so in not committing it, we resist no temptation. What I meant to insist on was, that exchanging a turbulent for a quiet sin, or a scandalous for an orderly one, is not reformation; or if you will allow me the strong word, is not conversion.'

Mr. Tyrrel, according to his appointment, came to dinner, and brought with him his nephew, Mr. Edward Tyrrel, whom he had lately entered at the university, with a design to prepare him for holy orders. He was a well-disposed young man, but his previous education was said to have been very much neglected, and he was rather deficient in the necessary learning. Mr. Stanley had heard that Tyrrel had two reasons for breeding him to the church. In the first place, he fancied it was the cheapest profession, and in the next, he had laboured to infuse into him some particular opinions of his own, which he wished to disseminate through his nephew. Sir George Aston having accidentally called, he was prevailed on to stay, and Dr. Barlow was of the party.

Mr. Tyrrel, by his observations, soon enabled us to discover that his religion had altered nothing but his language. He seemed evidently more fond of controversy than of truth, and the whole turn of his conversation indicated that he derived his religious security rather from the adoption of a party than from the implantation of a new principle. 'His discourse is altered,' said Mr. Stanley to me afterwards, 'but I greatly fear his heart and affections remain unchanged.'

Mr. Stanley contrived, for the sake of his two academical guests, particularly young Tyrrel, to divert the conversation to the subject of learning, more especially clerical learning.

In answer to a remark of mine on the satisfaction I had felt in seeing such a happy union of learning and piety in two clergymen who had lately dined at the Grove, Mr. Stanley said, 'Literature is an excellent thing, when it is not the best thing a man has. It cannot surely be an offence to our Maker to cultivate carefully his highest natural gift, our reason. In pious men it is peculiarly important, as the neglect of such cultivation, in certain individuals, has led to much error in religion, and given much just offence to the irreligious, who are very sharp-sighted to the faults of pious characters. I, therefore truly rejoice to see a higher tone of literature now prevailing, especially in so many of our pious young divines; the deficiency of learning in some of their well-meaning predecessors having served to bring not only themselves, but religion also into contempt, especially with men who have only learning.

Tyrrel. 'I say nothing against the necessity of learning in a lawyer, because it may help him to lead a judge, and to mislead a jury; nor in a physician, because it may advance his credit by enabling him to conceal the deficiencies of his art; nor in a private gentleman, because it may keep him out of worse mischief. But I see no use of learning in the clergy. There is my friend Dr. Barlow. I would willingly give up all his learning, if he would go a little deeper into the doctrines he professes to preach.'

Mr. Stanley. 'I should indeed think Dr. Barlow's various knowledge of little value, did he exhibit the smallest deficiency in the great points to which you allude. But when I am persuaded that his learning is so far from detracting from his piety, that it enables him to render it more extensively useful, I cannot wish him dispossessed of that knowledge which adorns his religion without diminishing its good effects.'

Tyrrel. 'You will allow that those first great publishers of Christianity, the Apostles, had none of this vain learning.'

Stanley. 'It is frequently pleaded by the despisers of learning, that the Apostles were illiterate. The fact is too notorious, and the answer too obvious to require to be dwelt upon. But it is unfortunately adduced to illustrate a position to which it can never apply, the vindication of an unlettered clergy. It is a hacknied remark, but not the less true for being old, that the wisdom of God chose to accomplish the first promulgation of the gospel by illiterate men, to prove that the work was his own, and that the success depended not on the instruments employed, but on the divinity of the truth itself. But if the Almighty chose to establish his religion by miracles, he chooses to carry it on by other means. And he no more sends an ignorant peasant or fisherman to instruct men in Christianity now, than he appointed a Socrates or a Plato to be its publishers at first. As, however, there is a great difference in the situations, so there may be a proportionable difference allowed in the attainments of the clergy. I do not say it is necessary for every village curate to be a profound scholar; but as he may not always remain in obscurity, there is no necessity for his being a contemptible one.'

Sir John. 'What has been said of those who affect to despise birth has been applied also to those who decry learning; neither is ever undervalued except by men who are destitute of them: and it is worthy of observation, that as literature and religion both sunk together in the dark ages, so both emerged at the same auspicious æra.

Mr. Stanley, finding that Dr. Barlow was not forward to embark in a subject which he considered as rather personal, said, 'Is it presumptuous to observe, that though the Apostles were unlettered men, yet those instruments who were

to be employed in services singularly difficult, the Almighty condescended partly to fit for their peculiar work by great human attainments? The Apostle of the Gentiles was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; and Moses, who was destined to the high office of a great legislator, was instructed in all the wisdom of the most learned nation then existing. The Jewish law-giver, though under the guidance of inspiration itself, did not fill his station the worse for this preparatory instruction. To how important a use the Apostle converted *his* erudition, we may infer from his conduct in the most learned and polished assembly in the world. He did not unnecessarily exasperate the polite Athenians by coarse upbraiding, or illiterate clamour, but he attacked them on their own ground. With what discriminating wisdom, with what powerful reasoning did he unfold to them that God whom they ignorantly worshipped! With what temper, with what elegance did he expose their shallow theology! Had he been as unacquainted with *their* religion, as they were with *his*, he had wanted the appropriate ground on which to build his instruction. He seized on the inscription of their own pagan altar, as a text from which to preach the doctrines of Christianity. From his knowledge of their errors, he was enabled to advance the cause of truth. He made their poetry, which he quoted, and their mythology which he would not have been able to explode if he had not understood it, a thesis from which to deduce the doctrine of the Resurrection: thus softening their prejudices and letting them see the infinite superiority of that Christianity which he enforced, to the mere learning and mental cultivation on which they so highly valued themselves. By the same sober discretion, accurate reasoning, and graceful elegance, he afterwards obtained a patient hearing, and a favourable judgment from king Agrippa.'

Dr. Barlow. 'It has always appeared to me, that a strong reason why the younger part of a clergyman's life should be in a good measure devoted to learning is, that he may afterwards discover its comparative vanity. It would have been a less difficult sacrifice for St. Paul to profess that he renounced all things for religion, if he had had nothing to renounce; and to count all things as dross in the comparison, if he had had no gold to put in the empty scale. Gregory Nazianzen, one of the most accomplished masters of Greek literature, declared that the chief value which he set upon it was, that in possessing it he had something of worth in itself to esteem as nothing in comparison of Christian truth. And it is delightful to hear Selden and Grotius, and Pascal and Salmasius, whom I may be allowed to quote, without being suspected of professional prejudice, as none of them were clergymen, while they warmly recommended to others, that learning, of which they themselves were the most astonishing examples, at the same time dedicating their lives to the advancement of religion. It is delightful, I say, to hear them acknowledge that their learning was only valuable as it put it in their power to promote Christianity, and to have something to sacrifice for its sake.'

Tyrrel. 'I can willingly allow that a poet, a dramatic poet especially, may study the works of the great critics of antiquity with some profit; but that a Christian writer of sermons can have any just ground for studying a Pagan critic, is to me quite inconceivable.'

Stanley. 'And yet, Mr. Tyrrel, a sermon is a work which demands regularity of plan, as well as a poem. It requires too, something of the same unity, arrangement, divisions and lucid order as a tragedy; something of the exordium and the peroration which belong to the composition of the orator. I do not mean that he is constantly to exhibit all this, but he should always understand it. And a discreet clergyman, especially one who is to preach before auditors of the higher rank, and who, in order to obtain respect from them, wishes to excel in the art of composition, will scarcely be less attentive to form his judgment by some acquaintance with Longinus and Quintilian than a dramatic poet. A writer of verse, it is true, may please to a certain degree by the force of mere genius, and a writer of sermons will instruct by the mere power of his piety; but neither the one nor the other will ever write well, if they do not possess the principles of good writing, and form themselves on the models of good writers.'

'Writing,' said Sir John, 'to a certain degree is an art, or, if you please, a trade. And as no man is allowed to set up in an ordinary trade till he has served a long apprenticeship to its *mysteries*, (the word, I think, used in indentures,) so no man should set up for a writer, till he knows somewhat of the mysteries of the art he is about to practice. He may, after all, if he wants talents, produce a vapid and inefficient book; but possess what talents he may, he will without knowledge, produce a crude and indigested one.'

Tyrrel. 'Still I insist upon it, that in a Christian minister the lustre of learning is tinsel, and human wisdom folly.'

Stanley. 'I am entirely of your opinion, if he rests in his learning as an *end* instead of using it as a *means*; if the fame, or the pleasure, or even the human profit of learning be his ultimate object. Learning in a clergyman without religion is dross, is nothing; not so religion without learning. I am persuaded that much good is done by men who, though deficient in this respect, are abundant in zeal and piety; but the good they do arises from the exertion of their piety, and not from the deficiency of their learning. Their labours are beneficial from the talent they exercise, and not from their want of another talent. The Spirit of God can work, and often does work by feeble instruments; and divine truth by its own omnipotent energy, can effect its own purposes. But particular instances do not go to prove that the instrument ought not to be fitted and polished, and sharpened for its allotted work. Every student should be emulously watchful that he does not diminish the stock of professional credit by his idleness: he should be stimulated to individual exertion, by bearing in mind that the English clergy have always been allowed by foreigners to be the most learned body in the world.'

Dr. Barlow. 'What Mr. Stanley has said of

the value of knowledge, does not at all militate against such fundamental prime truths—'This is eternal life to *know* God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent—I desire to *know* nothing, save Jesus Christ.—The natural man cannot *know* the things of the Spirit of God,' and a hundred other such passages.'

Tyrrel. 'Aye, Doctor, now you talk a little more like a Christian minister. But from the greater part of what has been asserted, you are all of you such advocates for human reason and human learning, as to give an air of paganism to your sentiments.'

Stanley. 'It does not diminish the utility, though it abases the pride of learning, that Christianity did not come into the world by human discovery, or the disquisitions of reason, but by immediate revelation. Those who adopt your way of thinking, Mr. Tyrrel, should bear in mind, that the work of God, in changing the heart, is not intended to supply the place of the human faculties. God expects, in his most highly favoured servants, the diligent exercise of their natural powers; and if any human being has a stronger call for the exercise of wisdom and judgment than another, it is a religious clergyman. Christianity does not supersede the use of natural gifts, but turns them into their proper channel.

'One distinction has often struck me. The enemy of mankind seizes on the soul through the medium of the passions and senses; the divine friend of man addresses him through his rational powers—*the eyes of your understanding being enlightened*, says the Apostle.'

Here I ventured to observe, that the highest panegyric bestowed on one of the brightest luminaries of our church, is that his name is seldom mentioned without the epithet *judicious* being prefixed to it. Yet does Hooker want fervour?—Does Hooker want zeal?—Does Hooker want courage in declaring the whole counsel of God?

Sir John. 'I hope we have now no clergyman to whom we may apply the biting sarcasm of Dr. South, on some of the popular but illiterate preachers of the opposite party in his day, 'that there was all the confusion of Babel, without the gift of tongues.'

Stanley. 'And yet that party produced some great scholars, and many eminently pious men. But look back to that day, and especially to the period a little antecedent to it, at those prodigies of erudition, the old Bishops and other divines of our Church. They were, perhaps, somewhat too profuse of their learning in their discourses, or rather they were so brimful, that they involuntarily overflowed. A juster taste, in our time, avoids that lavish display, which then not only crowded the margin, but forced itself into every part of the body of the work. The display of erudition might be wrong, but one thing is clear, it proved they had it, and as Dryden said, when he was accused of having too much wit, 'after all, it is a good crime.'

'We may justly,' said Dr. Barlow, 'in the refinement of modern taste, censure their prolixity, and ridicule their redundancies; we may smile at their divisions, which are numberless; and at their sub-divisions, which are endless: we may allow that this labour for perspicuity sometimes produced perplexity. But let us confess they always went to the bottom of whatever they embarked in. They ransacked the stores of ancient learning, and the treasures of modern science, not to indulge their vanity by obtruding their acquirements, but to prove, to adorn, and to illustrate the doctrine they delivered. How incredible must their industry have been, when the bare transcript of their voluminous folios seems alone sufficient to have occupied a long life!'

'The method,' said I, 'which they adopted of saying every thing that could be said on all topics, and exhausting them to the very dregs, though it may and does tire the patience of the reader, yet it never leaves him ignorant; and, of two evils, had not an author better be tedious than superficial? From an overflowing vessel you may gather more indeed than you want, but from an empty one you can gather nothing.'

Tyrrel. 'It appears to me that you wish to make a clergyman every thing but a Christian, and to bestow upon him every requisite except faith.'

Stanley. 'God forbid that I should make any comparison between human learning and Christian principle; the one is indeed lighter than the dust of the balance, when weighed against the other. All I contend for is, that they are not incompatible, and that human knowledge, used only in subserviency to that of the Scriptures, may advance the interests of religion. For the better elucidation of those scriptures, a clergyman should know not a little of ancient languages. Without some insight into remote history and antiquities, especially the Jewish, he will be unable to explain many of the manners and customs recorded in the sacred volume. Ignorance in some of these points, has drawn many attacks on our religion from sceptical writers. As to a thorough knowledge of ecclesiastical history, it would be superfluous to recommend that, it being the history of his own immediate profession. It is therefore requisite, not only for the general purposes of instruction, but that he may be enabled to guard against modern innovation, by knowing the origin and progress of the various heresies with which the Church in all ages has been infested.

Tyrrel. 'But he may be thoroughly acquainted with all this, and not have one spark of light.'

Dr. Barlow. 'He may indeed with deep concern I allow it. I will go further. The pride of learning, when not subdued by religion may help to extinguish that spark.—Reason has been too much decried by one party, and too much deified by the other. The difference between reason and revelation seems to be the same as between the eye and the light; the one is the organ of vision, the other the source of illumination.'

Tyrrel. 'Take notice, Stanley, that if I can help it, I'll never attend your accomplished clergyman.'

Stanley. (Smiling) 'I have not yet completed the circle of his accomplishment.—Besides what we call book learning, there is another species of knowledge in which some truly good men are sadly deficient; I mean an acquaintance

with human nature. The knowledge of the world, and of Him who made it; the study of the heart of man, and of him, who has the hearts of all men in his hand, enables a minister to excel in the art of instruction; one kind of knowledge reflecting light upon the other. The knowledge of mankind, then, I may venture to assert, is, next to religion, one of the first requisites of a preacher; and I cannot help ascribing the little success which has sometimes attended the ministry of even worthy men, to their want of this grand ingredient. It will diminish the use they might make of the great doctrines of our religion, if they are ignorant of the various modifications of the human character to which those doctrines are to be addressed.

'As no man ever made a true poet without this talent, one may venture to say, that few without it have ever made eminent preachers. Destitute of this, the most elaborate addresses will be only random shot, which if they hit, will be more owing to chance than to skill. Without this knowledge, warned by Christian affection, guided by Christian judgment, and tempered with Christian meekness, a clergyman will not be able in the pulpit to accommodate himself to the various wants of his hearers; without this knowledge, in his private spiritual visits, he will resemble those empirics in medicine who have but one method of treatment for all diseases, and who apply indiscriminately the same pill and the same drop to the various distempers of all ages, sexes, and constitutions. This spirit of accommodation does not consist in falsifying, or abridging, or softening, or disguising, any truth; but in applying truth in every form, communicating it in every direction, and diverting it into every channel. Some good men seem sadly to forget that precept—*making a difference*—for they act as if all characters were exactly alike.'

Tyrrel. 'You talk as if you would wish clergymen to depart from the singleness of truth, and preach two gospels.'

Stanley. 'Far from it. But though truth is single, the human character is multiplied almost to infinity, and cannot be addressed with advantage if it be not well understood. I am ashamed of having said so much on such a subject in presence of Dr. Barlow, who is silent through delicacy. I will only add, that a learned young clergyman is not driven for necessary relaxation to improper amusements. His mind will be too highly set, to be satisfied with those light diversions which purloin time without affording the necessary renovation to the body and spirits, which is the true and lawful end of all amusement. In all circumstances, learning confers dignity on his character. It enables him to raise the tone of general conversation, and is a safe kind of medium with persons of a higher class who are not religious; and it will always put it in his power to keep the standard of intercourse above the degrading topics of diversion, sports and vulgar gossip.'

Dr. Barlow. 'You see, Mr. Tyrrel, that a prudent combatant thinks only of defending himself on that side where he is assaulted. If Mr. Stanley's antagonist had been a vehement advocate for clerical learning as the great essential of his profession, he would have been the first to caution him against the pride and inflation which often attend learning, when not governed by religion.—Learning not so governed might injure Christian humility, and thus become a far more formidable enemy to religion than that which it was called in to oppose.'

Sir John said, smiling, 'I will not apply to the clergy, what Rasselas says to Imlac, after he had been enumerating the numberless qualities necessary to the perfection of the poetic art—'Thou hast convinced me that no man can be a poet;'—but if all Stanley says be just, I will venture to assert that no common share of industry and zeal will qualify a young student for that sacred profession. I have indeed no experience on the subject, as it relates to the clerical order; but I conceive in general, that learning is the best human preservative of virtue; that it safely fills up leisure, and honourably adorns life, even where it does not form the business of it.'

'Learning too,' said I, 'has this strong recommendation, that it is the offspring of a most valuable virtue, I mean industry; a quality on which I am ashamed to see Pagans frequently set a higher value than we seem to do.'

'I believe indeed,' replied Sir John, 'that the ancients had a higher idea of industry and severe application than we have. Tully calls them the *imperatoriæ virtutes*, and Alexander said that slaves might indulge in sloth, but that it was a most royal thing to labour.'

Stanley. 'It has been the error of sensible men of the world, to erect talents and learning into idols, which they would have universally and exclusively worshipped.—This has perhaps driven some religious men into such a fear of over cultivating learning, that they do not cultivate it at all. Hence the intervals between their religious employments, and intervals there must be while we are vested with these frail bodies, are languid and insipid, wasted in trifling and sauntering. Nay, it is well if this disoccupation of the intellect do not lead from sloth to improper indulges.'

'You are perfectly right,' said Sir John; 'our worthy friend Thompson is a living illustration of your remark. He was at college with us; he brought from thence a competent share of knowledge; has a fair understanding, and the manners of a gentleman. For several years past he has not only adopted a religious character, but is truly pious. As he is much in earnest, he very properly assigns a considerable portion of his time to religious reading. But as he is of no profession, the intermediate hours often hang heavy on his hands. He continues to live in some measure in the world, without the inconsistency of entering into its pursuits; but having renounced the study of human learning, and yet accustoming himself to mix occasionally with general society, he has few subjects in common with his company, but is dull and silent in all rational conversation, of which religion is not the professed object. He takes so little interest in any literary or political discussion, however useful, that it is evident nothing but his good breeding prevents his falling asleep At the same time he scruples not to violate con-

sistency in another respect, for his table is so elaborately luxurious, that it seems as if he were willing to add to the pleasures of sense, what he deducts from those of intellect.'

'I have often thought,' said Mr. Stanley, 'of sending him Dr. Barrow's *three sermons on industry in our calling as Christians, industry as gentlemen, and industry as scholars*; which sermons, by the way, I intended to have made my son read at least once a year, had he lived, that he might see the consistency, the compatability, nay, the analogy of the two latter with the former. I wish the spirit of these three discourses was infused into every gentleman, every scholar, and every Christian through the land. For my own part I should have sedulously laboured to make my son a sound scholar while I should have laboured still more sedulously to convince him that the value of learning depends solely on the purposes to which it is devoted. I would have a Christian gentleman able to beat the world at its own weapons, and convince it, that it is not from penury of mind, nor inability to distinguish himself in other matters, that he applies himself to seek that wisdom which is from above: that he does not fly to religion as a shelter from the ignominy of ignorance, but from a deep conviction of the comparative vanity of that very learning, which he yet is so assiduous to acquire.'

During this conversation, it was amusing to observe the different impressions made on the minds of our two college guests. Young Tyrrel, who, with moderate parts and slender application, had been taught to adopt some of his uncle's dogmas, as the cheapest way of being wise, greedily swallowed his eulogium of clerical ignorance, which the young man seemed to feel as a vindication of his own neglected studies, and an encouragement to his own mediocrity of intellect. While the interesting young baronet, though silent through modesty, discovered in his intelligent eyes, evident marks of satisfaction, in hearing that literature, for which he was every day acquiring a higher relish, warmly recommended as the best pursuit of a gentlemen, by the two men in the world, for whose judgment he entertained the highest reverence. At the same time it raised his veneration for Christian piety when he saw it so sedulously practised by these advocates for human learning

CHAP. XXII.

During these conversations, I remarked that Lucilla, though she commonly observed the most profound silence, had her attention always riveted on the speaker. If that speaker was Dr. Barlow, or her father, or any one whom she thought entitled to particular respect, she gently laid down her work, and as quietly resumed it when they had done speaking.

I observed to Sir John Belfield, afterwards, as we were walking together, how modestly flattering her manner was when any of us were reading! How intelligent her silence! How well-bred her attention!

'I have often contrasted it,' replied he, 'with the manner of some other ladies of my acquaintance, who are sometimes of our quiet evening party. When one is reading history, or any ordinary book aloud to them, I am always pleased that they should pursue their little employments. It amuses themselves and gives ease and familiarity to the social circle. But while I have been reading, as has sometimes happened, a passage of the highest sublimity, or most tender interest, I own I feel a little indignant to see the shuttle plied with as eager assiduity, as if the destinies themselves were weaving the thread. I have known a lady take up the candlestick to search for her netting-pin, in the midst of Cato's soliloquy; or stoop to pick up her scissars while Hamlet says to the ghost, 'I'll go no farther.' I remember another who would whisper across the table to borrow thread while Lear has been raving in the storm, or Macbeth starting at the spirit of Banquo; and make signs for a thread-paper, while cardinal Beaufort 'dies, and makes no sign.' Nay, once I remember when I was with much agitation hurrying through the gazette of the battle of Trafalgar, while I pronounced almost agonized, the last memorable words of the immortal Nelson, I heard one lady whisper to another, that she had broke her needle.'

'It would be difficult to determine, replied I, whether this inattention most betrays want of sense, of feeling, or of good breeding. The habit of attention should be carefully formed in early life, and then the mere force of custom would teach these ill-bred women 'to assume the virtue if they have it not.'

The family at the Grove was, with us, an inexhaustible topic whenever we met. I observed to Sir John, 'that I had sometimes observed in charitable families a display, a bustle, a kind of animal restlessness, a sort of mechanical *besoin* to be charitably busy. That though they fulfilled conscientiously one part of the Apostolic injunction, that of 'giving,' yet they failed in the other clause, that of doing it 'with simplicity.' 'Yes,' replied he, 'I visit a charitable lady in town, who almost puts me out of love with benevolence. Her own bounties form the entire subject of her conversation. As soon as the breakfast is removed, the table is always regularly covered with plans, and proposals, and subscription papers. This display conveniently performs the three-fold office of publishing her own charities, furnishing subjects of altercation, and raising contributions on the visitor. Her narratives really cost me more than my subscription. She is so full of debate, and detail, and opposition; she makes you read so many papers of her own drawing up, and so many answers to the schemes of other people, and she has so many objections to every other person's mode of doing good, and so many arguments to prove that her own is the best, that she appears less like a benevolent lady than a chicaning attorney.'

'Nothing,' said I, 'corrects this bustling bounty so completely, as when it is mixed up with religion; I should rather say, as when it flows from religion. This motive, so far from diminishing the energy, augments it; but it

cures the display, and converts the irritation into a principle. It transfers the activity from the tongue to the heart. It is the only sort of charity which 'blesses twice.' All charity, indeed, blesses the receiver; but the blessing promised to the giver, I have sometimes trembled to think, may be forfeited even by a generous mind, from ostentation and parade in the manner, and want of purity in the motive.'

'In Stanley's family,' replied he, in a more serious tone, 'I have met with a complete refutation of that favourite maxim of the world, that religion is a dull thing itself, and makes its professors gloomy and morose. Charles! I have often frequented houses where pleasure was the avowed object of idolatry. But to see the votaries of the 'reeling goddess,' after successive nights passed in her temples! to see the languor, the listlessness, the discontent—you would rather have taken them for her victims than her worshippers. So little mental vivacity, so little gayety of the heart! In short, after no careless observation, I am compelled to declare, that I never saw two forms less alike than those of Pleasure and Happiness.'

'Your testimony, Sir John,' said I, 'is of great weight in a case of which you are so experienced a judge. What a different scene do we now contemplate! Mr. Stanley seems to have diffused his own spirit through the whole family. What makes his example of such efficacy is, that he considers the Christian *temper* as so considerable a part of Christianity. This temper seems to imbue his whole soul, pervade his whole conduct, and influence his whole conversation. I see every day some fresh occasion to admire his candour, his humility, his constant reference, not as a topic of discourse, but as a principle of conduct, to the gospel, as the standard by which actions are weighed. His conscientious strictness of speech, his serious reproof of calumnies, his charitable construction of every case which has two sides; 'his simplicity and godly sincerity;' his rule of referring all events to providential direction, and his invariable habit of vindicating the divine goodness under dispensations apparantly the most unfavourable.'

Here Sir John left me, and I could not forbear pursuing the subject in soliloquy as I proceeded in my walk.—I reflected with admiration that Mr. Stanley in his religious conversation, rendered himself so useful, because instead of the uniform nostrum of *the drop and the pill*, he applied a different class of arguments as the case required, to objectors to the different parts of Christianity; to ill informed persons who adopted a partial gospel without understanding it as a scheme, or embracing it as a whole.—To those who allow its truth merely on the same ground of evidence that establishes the truth of any other well authenticated history; and who, satisfied with this external evidence, not only do not feel its power on their own heart, but deny that it has any such influence on the hearts of others;—to those who believe the gospel to be a mere code of ethics;—to their antipodes who assert that Christ has lowered the requisitions of the law;—to Lady Belfield who rests on her charities,—Sir John on his correctness,—Lady Aston on her austerities;—to this man who values himself solely on the stoutness of his orthodoxy; to another on the firmness of his integrity; to a third on the peculiarities of his party, he addresses himself with a particular view to their individual errors. This he does with such a discriminating application to the case, as might lead the ill informed to suspect that he was not equally earnest in those other points, which not being attacked he does not feel himself called on to defend, but which, had they been attacked, he would then have defended with equal zeal as relative to the discussion. To crown all, I contemplated that affectionate warmth of heart, that sympathizing kindness, that tenderness of feeling, of which the gay and the thoughtless fancy that they themselves possess the monopoly, while they make over harshness, austerity, and want of charity to religious men, as their inseparable characteristics.

These qualities excite in my heart a feeling compounded of veneration, and of love. And oh! how impossible it is, even in religion itself, to be disinterested! All these excellencies I contemplate with a more heart-felt delight, from the presumptuous hope that I may one day have the felicity of connecting myself still more intimately with them.

CHAP. XXIII.

Some days after, while we were conversing over our tea, we heard the noise of a carriage; and Mr. Stanley looking out from a bow window in which he and I were sitting, said, it was Lady and Miss Rattle driving up the avenue. He had just time to add, 'these are our *fine* neighbours. They always make us a visit as soon as they come down, while all the gloss and lustre of London is fresh upon them. We have always our regular routine of conversation. While her Ladyship is pouring the fashions into Mrs. Stanley's ear, Miss Rattle, who is about Phœbe's age, entertains my daughters and me with the history of her own talents and acquirements.'

Here they entered. After a few compliments, Lady Rattle seated herself between Lady Belfield and Mrs. Stanley, at the upper end of the room; while the fine, sprightly, boisterous girl of fifteen or sixteen threw herself back on the sofa at nearly her full length, between Mr. Stanley and me, the Miss Stanleys and Sir John sitting near us, within hearing of her lively loquacity.

'Well, Miss Amelia,' said Mr. Stanley, 'I dare say you have made good use of your time this winter; I suppose you have ere now completed the whole circle of the arts. Now let me hear what you have been doing, and tell me your whole achievements, as frankly as you used to do when you were a very little girl.' 'Indeed,' replied she, 'I have not been idle, if I must speak the truth. One has so many things to learn you know. I have gone on with my French and Italian of course, and I am beginning German. Then comes my drawing-master, he teazes me to paint flowers and shells, and

to draw ruins and buildings, and to take views. He is a good soul, and is finishing a set of pictures, and half a dozen fire screens which I began for mamma. He *does* help me to be sure, but indeed, I do some of it myself, don't I, mamma?' calling out to her mother, who was too much absorbed in her own narratives to attend to her daughter.

'And then,' pursued the young prattler, 'I learn varnishing, and gilding, and japanning. And next winter I shall learn modelling, and etching, and engraving in mezzotinto and aquatinta, for Lady Di. Dash learns etching, and mamma says, as I shall have a better fortune than Lady Di, she vows I shall learn every thing she does. Then I have a dancing-master, who teaches me the Scotch and Irish steps; and another who teaches me attitudes, and I shall soon learn the waltz, and I can stand longer on one leg already than Lady Di. Then I have a singing-master, and another who teaches me the harp, and another for the piano-forte. And what little time I can spare from these *principal* things, I give by odd minutes to ancient and modern history, and geography, and astronomy, and grammar, and botany. Then I attend lectures on chemistry, and experimental philosophy, for as I am not yet come out, I have not much to do in the evenings; and mamma says, there is nothing in the world that money can pay for, but what I shall learn. And I run so delightfully fast from one thing to another that I am never tired. What makes it so pleasant is, as soon as I am fairly set in with one master, another arrives. I should hate to be long at the same thing. But I shan't have a great while to work so hard, for as soon as I come out, I shall give it all up, except music and dancing.'

All this time Lucilla sat listening with a smile, behind the complacency of which she tried to conceal her astonishment. Phœbe, who had less self-control, was on the very verge of a broad laugh. Sir John, who had long lived in a soil where this species is indigenous, had been too long accustomed to all its varieties, to feel much astonishment at this specimen, which, however, he sat contemplating with philosophical, but discriminating coolness.

For my own part, my mind was wholly absorbed in contrasting the coarse manners of this voluble and intrepid, but good humoured girl, with the quiet cheerful, and unassuming elegance of Lucilla.

'I should be afraid, Miss Rattle,' said Mr. Stanley, 'if you did not look in such blooming health, that with all these incessant labours, you did not allow yourself time for rest. Surely you never sleep?'

'Oh yes, that I do, and eat too,' said she; 'my life is not quite so hard and moping as you fancy. What between shopping and morning visits with mamma, and seeing sights, and the park, and the gardens, (which, by the way, I hate, except on a Sunday when they are crowded,) and our young balls, which are four or five in a week after Easter, and mamma's music parties at home, I contrive to enjoy myself tolerably; though after I have been presented, I shall be a thousand time better off, for then I shan't have a moment to myself. Won't that be delightful?' said she, twitching my arm, rather roughly, by way of recalling my attention, which however had seldom wandered.

As she had now run out her London materials, the news of the neighbourhood next furnished a subject for her volubility. After she had mentioned in detail one or two stories of low village gossip; while I was wondering how she should come at them, she struck me dumb by quoting the coachman as her authority. This enigma was soon explained. The mother and daughter having exhausted their different topics of discourse nearly at the same time, they took their leave, in order to enrich every family in the neighbourhood, on whom they were going to call, with the same valuable knowledge which they had imparted to us.

Mr. Stanley conducted Lady Rattle, and led her daughter; but as I offered to hand her into the carriage, she started back with a sprightly motion, and screamed out, 'Oh no, not in the inside, pray help me up to the *Dickey*. I always protest I never *will* ride with any body but the coachman, if we go ever so far.' So saying, with a spring which showed how much she despised my assistance, the little hoyden was seated in a moment, nodding familiarly at me, as if I had been an old friend.

Then with a voice, emulating that which, when passing by Charing-Cross, I have heard issued from an over stuffed stage vehicle, when a robust sailor has thrust his body out at the window, the fair creature vociferated, 'Drive on, coachman!' He obeyed, and turning round her whole person, she continued nodding at me till they were out of sight.

'Here is a mass of accomplishments,' said I, 'without one particle of mind, one ray of common sense, or one shade of delicacy!—Surely somewhat less time, and less money might have sufficed to qualify a companion for the coachman!'

'What poor creatures are we men,' said I to Mr. Stanley as soon as he came in! 'We think it very well, if after much labour and long application we can attain to one or two of the innumerable acquirements of this gay little girl. Nor is this I find the rare achievement of one happy genius. There is a whole class of these miraculous females.—Miss Rattle

'Is knight o' th' shire, and represents them all.'

'It is only young ladies,' replied he, 'whose vast abilities, whose mighty grasp of mind, can take in every thing. Among men, learned men, talents are commonly directed into some one channel, and fortunate is he, who in that one attains to excellence. The linguist is rarely a painter, nor is the mathematician often a poet. Even in one profession there are divisions and subdivisions.—The same lawyer never thinks of presiding both in the King's Bench, and in the Court of Chancery. The science of healing is not only divided into its three distinct branches, but in the profession of Surgery only, how many are the subdivisions! One professor undertakes the eye, another the ear, and a third the teeth. But woman, ambitious, aspiring, universal, triumphant, glorious woman, even at the age of a school boy, encounters the whole

range of arts, attacks the whole circle of sciences!'

'A mighty maze, and *quite* without a plan,' replied Sir John, laughing. 'But the truth is, the misfortune does not so much consist in their learning every thing as in their knowing nothing; I mean nothing well. When gold is beaten out so wide, the lamina must needs be very thin. And you may observe, the more valuable attainments, though they are not to be left out of the modish plan, are kept in the back ground; and are to be picked up out of the odd remnants of that time, the sum of which is devoted to frivolous accomplishments. All this gay confusion of acquirements, these holiday splendours, this superfluity of enterprize, enumerated in the first part of her catalogue, is the *real business* of education; the latter part is incidental, and if taught is not learnt.

'As to the lectures so boastfully mentioned, they may doubtless be made very useful subsidiaries to instruction. They most happily illustrate book-knowledge; but if the pupil's instruction in private do not precede, and keep pace, with these useful public exhibitions, her knowledge will be only presumptuous ignorance. She may learn to talk of oxygen and hydrogen, and deflagration, and trituration, but she will know nothing of the science except the terms. It is not knowing the name of his tools that makes an artist; and I should be afraid of the vanity which such superficial information would communicate to a mind, not previously prepared, nor exercised at home in corresponding studies. But as Miss Rattle honestly confessed, as soon as she *comes out* all these things will die away of themselves, and dancing and music will be almost all which will survive her multifarious pursuits.'

'I look upon the great predominance of music in female education,' said Mr. Stanley, 'to be the source of more mischief than is suspected; not from any evil in the thing itself, but from its being such a gulph of time, as really to leave little room for solid acquisitions. I love music, and were it only cultivated as an amusement, should commend it. But the monstrous proportion, or rather disproportion of life which it swallows up, even in many religious families, and this is the chief subject of my regret, has converted an innocent diversion into a positive sin. I question if many gay men devote more hours in a day to idle purposes, than the daughters of many pious parents spend in this amusement. All these hours the mind lies fallow, improvement is at a stand, if even it does not retrograde. Nor is the shreds and scraps of time, stolen in the intervals of better things, that is so devoted; but it is the morning, the prime, the profitable, the active hours, when the mind is vigorous, the spirits light, the intellect awake and fresh, and the whole being wound up by the refreshment of sleep, and animated by the return of light and life, for nobler services.'

'If,' said Sir John, music were cultivated to embellish retirement, to be practised where pleasures are scarce, and good performers are not to be had, it would quite alter the case. But the truth is, these highly taught ladies are not only living in public where they constantly hear the most exquisite professors, but they have them also at their own houses. Now one of these two things must happen; Either the performance of the lady will be so inferior as not to be worth hearing on the comparison, or so good that she will fancy herself the rival, instead of the admirer of the performer, whom she had better pay and praise than fruitlessly emulate.'

'This anxious struggle to reach the unattainable excellence of the professor,' said Mr. Stanley, 'often brings to my mind the contest for victory between the ambitious nightingale and the angry lunatist in the beautiful Prolusion of Strada.'

'It is to the predominance of this talent,' replied I, 'that I ascribe that want of companionableness of which I complain. The excellence of musical performance is a decorated screen, behind which all defects in domestic knowledge, in taste, judgment and literature, and the talents which make an elegant companion, are credibly concealed.

I have made,' said Sir John, 'another remark. Young ladies, who from apparent shyness do not join in the conversation of a small select party, are always ready enough to entertain them with music on the slightest hint. Surely it is equally modest to *say* as to *sing*, especially to sing those melting strains we sometimes hear sung, and which we should be ashamed to hear said. After all, how few hours are there in a week, in which a man engaged in the pursuits of life, and a woman in the duties of a family, wish to employ in music. I am fond of it myself, and Lady Belfield plays admirably; but with the cares inseparable from the conscientious discharge of her duty with so many children, how little time has she to play, or I to listen! But there is no day, no hour, no meal in which I do not enjoy in her the ever ready pleasure of an elegant and interesting companion. A man of sense, when all goes smoothly, wants to be entertained; under vexation to be soothed; in difficulties to be counselled; in sorrow to be comforted. In a mere artist can he reasonably look for these resources?'

'Only figure to yourself,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'my six girls daily playing their four hours a piece, which is now a moderate allowance! As we have but one instrument they must be at it in succession, day and night, to keep pace with their neighbours. If I may compare light things with serious ones, it would resemble,' added he, smiling, 'the perpetual psalmody of good Mr. Nicholas Ferrar, who had relays of musicians every six hours to sing the whole Psalter through every day and night! I mean not to ridicule that holy man; but my girls thus keeping their useless vigils in turn, we should only have the melody without any of the piety. No, my friend! I will have but two or three singing birds to cheer my little grove. If all the world are performers, there will soon be no hearers. Now, as I am resolved in my own family that some shall listen, I will have but few to perform.'

'It must be confessed,' said Sir John, 'that Miss Rattle is no servile imitator of the vapid tribe of the superficially accomplished. Her violent animal spirits prevent her from growing

smooth by attrition. She is as rough and angular as rusticity itself could have made her. Where strength of character, however, is only marked by the worst concomitant of strength, which is coarseness, I should almost prefer insanity itself.'

'I should a little fear,' said I, 'that I lay too much stress on companionableness, on the *positive duty of being agreeable at home*, had I not early learnt the doctrine from my father, and seen it exemplified so happily in the practice of my mother.'

'I entirely agree with you, Charles,' said Mr. Stanley, 'as to the absolute *morality* of being agreeable, and even entertaining in one's own family circle. Nothing so soon and so certainly wears out the happiness of married persons, as that too common bad effect of familiarity, the sinking down into dulness and insipidity; neglecting to keep alive the flame by the delicacy which first kindled it; want of vigilance in keeping the temper cheerful by Christian discipline, and the faculties bright by constant use. Mutual affection decays of itself, even where there is no great moral turpitude, without mutual endeavours, not only to improve, but to amuse.

'This,' continued he, 'is one of the great arts of *home enjoyment*. That it is so little practised accounts in a good measure for the undomestic turn of too many married persons. The man meets abroad with amusement, and the woman with attentions, to which they are not accustomed at home. Whereas a capacity to please, on the one part, and a disposition to be pleased on the other, in their own house, would make most visits appear dull. But then the disposition and the capacity must be cultivated antecedent to marriage. A woman whose whole education has been rehearsal, will always be dull, except she lives on the stage, constantly displaying what she has been sedulously acquiring. Books, on the contrary, well chosen books, do not lead to exhibition. The knowledge a woman acquires in private desires no witnesses; the possession is the pleasure. It improves herself, it embellishes her family society, it entertains her husband, it informs her children. The gratification is cheap, is safe, is always to be had at home.'

'It is superfluous,' said Sir John, 'to decorate women so highly for early youth; youth is itself a decoration. We mistakenly adorn most that part of life which least requires it, and neglect to provide for that which will want it most. It is for that sober period, when life has lost its freshness, the passions their intenseness, and the spirits their hilarity, that we should be preparing. Our wisdom would be to anticipate the wants of middle life, to lay in a store of notions, ideas, principles, and habits, which may preserve, or transfer to the mind that affection, which was at first partly attracted by the person. But to add a vacant mind to a form which has ceased to please; to provide no subsidiary aid to beauty while it lasts, and especially no substitute when it is departed, is to render life comfortless, and marriage dreary.'

'The reading of a cultivated woman,' said Mr. Stanley, 'commonly occupies less time than the music of a musical woman, or the idleness of an indolent woman, or the dress of a vain woman, or the dissipation of a fluttering woman; she is therefore likely to have more leisure for her duties, as well as more inclination, and a sounder judgment for performing them. But, pray observe, that I assume my reading woman to be a religious woman; and I will not answer for the effect of a literary vanity, more than for that of any other vanity, in a mind not habitually disciplined by Christian principle, the only safe and infallible antidote for knowledge of every kind.

Before we had finished our conversation, we were interrupted by the arrival of the post. Sir John eagerly opened the newspaper; but, instead of gratifying our impatience with the intelligence for which we panted from the glorious Spaniards, he read a paragraph which stated 'that Miss Denham had eloped with Signior Squallini, that they were on their way to Scotland, and that Lady Denham had been in fits ever since.'

Lady Belfield, with her usual kindness, was beginning to express how much she pitied her old acquaintance. 'My dear Caroline,' said Sir John, 'there is too much substantial and inevitable misery in the world, for you to waste much compassion on this foolish woman. Lady Denham has little reason to be surprised at an event which all reasonable people must have anticipated. Provoking and disgraceful as it is, what has she to blame but her own infatuation? This Italian was the associate of all her pleasures; the constant theme of her admiration. He was admitted when her friends were excluded. The girl was continually hearing that music was the best gift, and that Signior Squallini was the best gifted. 'Miss Denham,' added he laughing, 'had more wit than your Strada's nightingale. Instead of dropping down dead on the lute for envy, she thought it better to run away with the lutanist for love. I pity the poor girl, however, who has furnished such a commentary to our text, and who is rather the victim of a wretched education than of her own bad propensities.'

CHAP. XXIV.

I HAD generally found that a Sunday passed in a visit was so heavy a day, that I had been accustomed so to arrange my engagements, as commonly to exclude this from the days spent from home. I had often found that even where the week had been pleasantly occupied, the necessity of passing several hours of a season peculiarly designed for religious purposes, with people whose habits have little similarity with our own, either draws one into their relaxed mode of getting rid of the day, or drives one to a retirement, which having an unsociable appearance, is liable to the reproach of austerity and gloom.

The case was quite different at Stanley Grove. The seriousness was without severity, and the cheerfulness had no mixture of levity. The family seemed more than usually animated, and there was a variety in the religious pursuits of

the young people enlivened by intervals of cheerful and improving conversation, which peculiarly struck Lady Belfield. She observed to me that the difficulty of getting through the Sunday, without any mixture of worldly occupations or amusements on the one hand, or of disgust and weariness on the other, was among the many right things which she had never been able to accomplish in her own family.

As we walked from church on Sunday, Miss Stanley told me that her father does not approve the habit of criticising the sermon. He says that the custom of pointing out the faults cannot be maintained, without the custom of watching for them; that it gives the attention a wrong turn, and leads the hearer only to treasure up such passages as may serve for animadversion, and a display, not of Christian temper, but of critical skill. If the general tenor and principle be right, that is the main point they are to look to, and not to hunt for philological errors. That the hearer would do well to observe, whether it is not 'he that sleeps,' as often at least, as 'Homer nods:' a remark exemplified at church, as often as on the occasion which suggested it. That a critical spirit is the worst that can be brought out of church, being a symptom of an unhumbled mind, and an evidence, that whatever the sermon may have done for others, it has not benefitted the caviller.

Here Mr. Stanley joined us. I found he did not encourage his family to take down the sermon. 'It is no disparagement,' said he, 'to the discourse preached, to presume that there may be as good already printed. Why therefore not read the printed sermon at home in the evening, instead of that, by which you ought to have been improving while it was delivering? If it be true that *faith cometh by hearing*, an inferior sermon, 'coming warm and instant from the heart,' assisted by all the surrounding solemnities which make a sermon *heard* so different from one *read*, may strike more forcibly than an abler discourse coolly perused at home. In writing, the mechanical act must necessarily lessen the effect to the writer, and to the spectator it diminishes the dignity of the scene, and seems like short-hand writers taking down a trial.'

'But that my daughters may not plead this as an excuse for inattention,' continued he, 'I make it a part of their evening duty to repeat what they retain, separately to me in my library. The consciousness that this repetition will be required of them, stimulates their diligence; and the exercise itself not only strengthens the memory, but habituates to serious reflection.'

At tea, Phœbe, a charming warm-hearted creature, but who, now and then carried away by the impulse of the moment, forgets habits and prohibitions, said, 'I think, papa, Dr. Barlow was rather dull to-day. There was nothing new in the sermon.' 'My dear,' replied her father, 'we do not go to church to hear news. Christianity is no novelty; and though it is true that we go to be instructed, yet we require to be reminded full as much as to be taught. General truths are what we all acknowledge, and all forget. We acknowledge them, because a general assent of the understanding costs but little; and we forget them, because the remembrance would force upon the conscience a great deal of practical labour. To believe, and remember, and act upon, common, undisputed, general truths, is the most important part of religion. This, though in fact very difficult, is overlooked, on account of its being supposed very easy. To keep up in the heart a lively impression of a few plain momentous truths, is of more use than the ablest discussion of an hundred controverted points.

'Now tell me, Phœbe, do you really think that you have remembered and practised all the instructions that you have received from Dr. Barlow's sermons last year? If you have, though you will have a better right to be critical, you will be less disposed to be so. If you have not, do not complain that the sermon is not new, till you have made all possible use of the old ones; which if you had done, you would have acquired so much humility, that you would meekly listen even to what you already know. But however the discourse may have been superfluous to such deep divines as Miss Phœbe Stanley, it will be very useful to me, and to other hearers who are not so wise.'

Poor Phœbe blushed up to her ears; tears rushed into her eyes. She was so overcome with shame that, regardless of the company, she flew into her father's arms, and softly whispered that if he would forgive her foolish vanity, she would never again be above being taught. The fond, but not blind father, withdrew with her. Lucilla followed with looks of anxious love.

During their short absence, Mrs. Stanley said, 'Lucilla is so practically aware of the truth of her father's observation, that she often says she finds as much advantage as pleasure in teaching the children at her school. This elementary instruction obliges her continually to recur to first principles, to keep constantly uppermost in her mind those great truths contained in the articles of our belief, the commandments, and the prayer taught by our Redeemer. This perpetual simplifying of religion, she assures me, keeps her more humble, fixes her attention on the fundamental truths, and makes her more indifferent to controverted points.'

In a few minutes Mr. Stanley and his daughters returned cheerful and happy: Lucilla smiling like the angel of peace and love.

'If I were not afraid,' said Lady Belfield, 'of falling under the same censure with my friend Phœbe,' smiling on the sweeet girl, 'I should venture to say that I thought the sermon rather too severe.'

'Do not be afraid, Madam,' replied Mr. Stanley: 'though I disapprove that cheap and cruel criticism which makes a man *an offender for a word*, yet discussion does not necessarily involve censoriousness; so far from it, it is fair to discuss whatever seems to be doubtful, and I shall be glad to hear your Ladyship's objections.

'Well then,' replied she, in the most modest tone and accent, 'with all my reverence for Dr. Barlow, I thought him a little unreasonable in seeming to expect universal goodness from creatures whom he yet insisted were fallen creatures.'

'Perhaps, Madam,' said Mr. Stanley, 'you

mistook his meaning, for he appeared to me perfectly consistent, not only with himself, but with his invariable rule and guide, the Scriptures. Sanctification, will you allow me to use so serious a word, however imperfect, must be universal. It is not the improvement of any one faculty, or quality, or temper, which divines mean, when they say we are renewed in part, so much as that the change is not perfect, the holiness is not complete in *any* part, or power, or faculty, though progressive in all. He who earnestly desires an universal victory over sin, knows which of his evil dispositions or affections it is, that is yet unsubdued. This rebellious enemy he vigilantly sets himself to watch against, to struggle with, and, through divine grace, to conquer. The test of his sincerity does not so much consist in avoiding many faults to which he has no temptation, as in conquering that one to which his natural bent and bias forcibly impels him.'

Lady Belfield said, 'But is it not impossible to bring every part of our nature under this absolute dominion? Suppose a man is very passionate and yet very charitable; would you look upon that person to be in a dangerous state?'

'It is not my province, Madam, to decide,' replied Mr. Stanley. 'God,' as Bishop Sanderson says, 'reserves this *royalty* to himself, of being the searcher of hearts.' I cannot judge how far he resists anger, nor what are his secret struggles against it.—God, who expects not perfection, expects sincerity. Though complete, unmixed goodness is not to be attained in this imperfect state, yet the earnest desire after it is the only sure criterion of the sincerity we profess. If the man you allude to does not watch and pray, and strive against the passion of anger, which is his natural infirmity, I should doubt whether any of his affections were really renewed: and I should fear that his charity was rather a mere habitual feeling, though a most amiable one, than a Christian grace. He indulges in charity, because it is a constitutional bias, and costs him nothing. He indulges in passion because it is a natural bias also; and to set about a victory over it would cost him a great deal. This should put him on a strict self-examination; when he would probably find that, while he gives the uncontrolled reins to any one wrong inclination, his religion, even when he does right things, is questionable. True religion is seated in the heart: that is the centre from which all the lines of right practice must diverge. It is the great duty and chief business of a Christian to labour to make all his affections, with all their motives, tendencies, and operations, subservient to the word and will of God. His irregular passions, which are still apt to start out into disorder, will require vigilance to the end.—He must not think all is safe, because the more tractable ones are not rebellious; but he may entertain a cheerful hope, when those which were once rebellious are become tractable.'

'I feel the importance of what you say,' returned Lady Belfield; 'but I feel also my utter inability to set about it.'

'My dear Madam,' said Mr. Stanley, 'this is the best and most salutary feeling you can have. That very consciousness of inefficacy will, I trust, drive you to the fountain of all strength and power; it will quicken your faith and animate your prayer; faith which is the habitual principle of confidence in God; and prayer, which is the exercise of that principle toward Him who is the object of it.'

'But, Dr. Barlow,' said Lady Belfield, 'was so discouraging! He seemed to intimate, as if the conflict of a Christian with sin must be as lasting as his life; whereas I had hoped that victory once obtained, was obtained forever.'

'The *strait gate*,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'is only the entrance of religion; the *narrow way* is a continued course. The Christian life, my dear Lady Belfield, is not a point but a progress. It is precisely in the race of Christianity as in the race of human glory. Julius Cæsar and St. Paul describe their respective warfares in nearly the same terms.—*We should count nothing done, while any thing remains undone,** says the Warrior.—*Not counting myself to have attained—forgetting the things which are behind, and pressing forward to those which are before*, says the Apostle. And it is worth remarking, that they both made the disqualifying observation after attainments almost incredible. As there was no being a hero by any idler way, so there is no being a Christian by any easier road. The necessity of pursuit is the same in both cases, though the objects pursued differ as widely as the vanities of time from the riches of eternity.

'Do not think, my dear Madam,' added Mr. Stanley, 'that I am erecting myself into a censor, much less into a model. The corruptions which I lament, I participate. The deficiencies which I deplore, I feel. Not only when I look abroad, am I persuaded of the general prevalence of evil by what I see; but when I look into my own heart, my conviction is confirmed by what I experience. I am conscious, not merely of frailties, but of sins. I will not hypocritically accuse myself of gross offences which I have not temptation to commit, and from the commission of which, motives inferior to religion would preserve me. But I am continually humbled in detecting mixed motives in almost all I do. Such strugglings of pride with my endeavours after humility! Such irresolution in my firmest purposes! So much imperfection in my best actions! So much want of simplicity in my purest designs! Such fresh shoots of selfishness where I had hoped the plant itself had been eradicated! Such frequent deadness in duty! Such coldness in my affections! Such infirmity of will! Such proneness to earth in my highest aspiration after heaven! All these you see would hardly make in the eyes of those who want Christian discernment; very gross sins; yet they prove demonstrably the root of sin in the heart, and the infection of nature tainting my best resolves.'

'The true Christian,' said I, when Mr. Stanley had done speaking, 'extracts humility from the very circumstance which raises pride in the irreligious. The sight of any enormity in another, makes the mere moralist proud that he is

* Nil actum reputans dum quod superesset agendum. —Lucan.

exempt from it, while the religious man is humbled from a view of the sinfulness of that nature he partakes, a nature which admits of such excesses, and from which excesses he knows that he himself is preserved by divine grace alone. I have often observed that comparison is the aliment of pride in the worldly man, and of self-abasement in the Christian.'

Poor Lady Belfield looked comforted on finding that her friend Mr. Stanley was not quite so perfect as she had feared. 'Happy are those,' exclaimed she, looking at Lucilla, 'the innocence of whose lives recommends them to the divine favour.'

'Innocence,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'can never be pleaded as a ground of acceptance, because the thing does not exist. Innocence excludes the necessity of repentance; and where there is no sin, there can be no need of a Saviour. Whatever therefore we may be in comparison with others, innocence can afford no plea for our acceptance, without annulling the great plan of our redemption.'

'One thing puzzles me,' said Lady Belfield. 'The most worthless people I converse with deny the doctrine of human corruption, a doctrine the truth of which one should suppose their own feelings must confirm; while those few excellent persons who almost seem to have escaped it, insist the most peremptorily on its reality. But if it be really true, surely the mercies of God are so great, that he will overlook the frailties of such weak and erring mortals. So gracious a Saviour will not exact such rigorous obedience from creatures so infirm.'

'Let not what I am going to say, my dear Lady Belfield,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'offend you; the correctness of your conduct exempts you from any particular application. But there are too many Christians, who while they speak with reverence of Christ as the Saviour of sinners, do not enough consider him as a deliverer from sin. They regard him rather as having lowered the requisitions of the law, and exonerated his followers from the necessity of that strictness of life which they view as a burthensome part of their religion. From this burthen they flatter themselves it was the chief object of the gospel to deliver them; and from this supposed deliverance it is that they chiefly consider it as a merciful dispensation. A cheap Christianity, of which we can acquit ourselves by a general recognition, and a few stated observances, which require no sacrifices of the will, nor rectification of the life, is, I assure you, the prevailing system; the religion of that numerous class who like to save appearances, and to decline realities; who expect every thing hereafter while they resolve to give up nothing here; but who keep heaven in view as a snug reversion after they shall have squeezed out of this world, to the very last dregs and droppings, all it has to give.'

Lady Belfield, with great modesty, replied, 'Indeed I am ashamed to have said so much upon a topic on which I am unable, and unused to debate. Sir John only smiles, and looks resolved not to help me out. Believe me, however, my dear Sir, that what I have said proceeds not from presumption, but from an earnest desire of being set right. I will only venture to offer one more observation on the afternoon sermon. Dr. Barlow, to my great surprise, spoke of the death of Christ as exhibiting *practical* lessons. Now, though I have always considered it in a general way, as the cause of our salvation, yet its preceptive and moral benefits, I must confess, do not appear to me at all obvious.'

'I conceive,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'our deliverance from the punishment incurred by sin to be one great end and object of the death of our Redeemer; but I am very far from considering this as the only benefit attending it. I conceive it to be most abundant in instruction, and the strongest possible incentive to practical goodness; and that in a great variety of ways. The death of our Redeemer shows us the infinite value of our souls, by showing the inestimable price paid for them, and thus leads us to more diligence in securing their eternal felicity. It is calculated to inspire us with an unfeigned hatred of sin, and more especially to convince us of God's hatred to that, for the pardon of which such a sacrifice was deemed necessary. Now, if it actually produce such an effect, it consequently stimulates us to repentance, and to an increasing dread of violating those engagements which we have so often made to lead a better life. Then the contemplation of this stupendous circumstance will tend to fill our hearts with such a sense of gratitude and obedience, as will be likely to preserve us from relapsing into fresh offences. Again—can any motive operate so powerfully on us towards producing universal charity and forgiveness? Whatever promotes our love to God will dispose us to an increased love for our fellow-creatures. We cannot converse with any man, we cannot receive a kindness from any man, nay, we cannot receive an injury from any man, for whom the Redeemer has not died. The remembrance of the sufferings which procured pardon for the greatest offences, has a natural tendency to lead us to forgive small ones.'

Lady Belfield said, 'I had not indeed imagined there were any practical uses in an event to which I had been, however, accustomed to look with reverence as an atonement for sin.'

'Of these practical effects,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'I will only farther observe, that all human considerations put together, cannot so powerfully inspire us with an indifference to the vanities of life, and the allurements of unhallowed pleasures. No human motive can be so efficacious in sustaining the heart under trials, and reconciling it to afflictions. For what trials and afflictions do not sink into nothing in comparison with the sufferings attending that august event, from which we derive this support? The contemplation of this sacrifice also degrades wealth, debases power, annihilates ambition. We rise from this contemplation with a mind prepared to bear with the infirmities, to relieve the wants, to forgive the unkindness of men. We extract from it a more humbling sense of ourselves, a more subdued spirit, a more sober contempt of whatever the world calls great, than all the lectures of ancient philosophy, or the teachers of modern morals ever inspired.'

During this little debate Sir John maintained

the most invincible silence. His countenance bore not the least mark of ill-humour or impatience, but it was serious and thoughtful; except when his wife got into any little difficulty; he then encouraged her by an affectionate smile, but listened like a man who has not quite made up his mind, yet thinks the subject too important to be dismissed without a fair and candid hearing.

CHAP. XXV.

While we were at breakfast next morning, a sweet little girl flew into the room almost breathless with joy; and running to her mother, presented her with a beautiful nosegay.

'O, I see you were the industrious girl last week, Kate,' said Mrs. Stanley, embracing her, and admiring the flowers. Lady Belfield looked inquisitively. 'It is an invention of Lucilla's,' said the mother, 'that the little one who performs best in the school-room, instead of having any reward which may excite vanity or sensuality, shall be taught to gratify a better feeling, by being allowed to present her mother with a nosegay of the finest flowers, which it is reward enough to see worn at dinner, to which she is always admitted when there is no company; Oh! Pray do not consider us as company; pray let Kate dine with us to-day,' said Lady Belfield. Mrs. Stanley bowed her assent and went on. But this is not all.—The flowers they present, they also raise. I went rather too far, when I said that no vanity was excited; they are vain enough of their carnations, and each is eager to produce the largest. In this competition, however, the vanity is not personal. Lucilla has some skill in raising flowers, each girl has a subordinate post under her. Their father often treats them with half a day's work, and then they all treat me with tea and cakes in the honey-suckle arbour of their own planting, which is called Lucilla's bower. It would be hard to say whether parents or children most enjoy these happy holidays.'

At dinner Mrs. Stanley appeared with her nosegay in a large knot of ribbons, which was eyed with no small complacency by little Kate. I observed that Lucilla, who used to manifest much pleasure in the conversation after dinner, was beckoned out of the room by Phœbe, as soon as it was over. I felt uneasy at an absence to which I had not been accustomed; but the cause was explained, when at six o'clock, Kate who was the queen of the day, was sent to invite us to drink tea in Lucilla's bower. We instantly obeyed the summons.

'I knew nothing of this,' said the delighted mother, while we were all admiring the elegant arrangements of this little fete. The purple clematis twisting its flexible branches with those of the pale woodbine, formed a sweet and fragrant canopy to the arched bower, while the flowery tendrils hung down on all sides. Large bunches of roses, intermixed with the silver stars of the jessamine, were stuck into the moss on the inside as a temporary decoration only. The finest plants had been brought from the green-house for the occasion. It was a delicious evening, and the little fairy festivity, together with the flitting about of the airy spirits which had prepared it, was absolutely enchanting. Sir John, always poetical, exclaimed in rapture,

> 'Hesperian fables true,'
> If true, here only.'

I needed not this quotation to bring the garden of Eden to my mind, for Lucilla presided. Phœbe was all alive. The other little ones had decorated Kate's flaxen hair with a wreath of woodbines. They sung two or three baby stanzas, which they had composed among themselves, in which Kate was complimented as queen of the fete. The youngest daughter of Lady Aston, who was about Kate's age, and two little girls of Dr. Barlow's were of the children's party on the green. The elder sisters of both families made part of the company within.

When we were all seated in our enchanting bower, and drinking our tea, at which we had no other attendants than the little Hebes themselves, I asked Kate how it happened that she seemed to be distinguished on this occasion from her little sisters. 'Oh Sir,' said she, 'it is because it is my birth-day. I am eight years old to-day. I gave up all my gilt books with pictures this day twelve-month, and to-day I give up all my little story books, I am now going to read such books as men and women read.'

She then ran to her companions, who ranged themselves round a turf seat at a little distance before us, to which were transferred a profusion of cakes and fruit from the bower. While they were devouring them, I turned to Mr. Stanley, and desired an explanation of Kate's speech.

'I make,' said he, 'the renouncing their baby books a kind of epocha, and by thus distinctly marking the period, they never think of returning back to them. We have in our domestic plan several of these artificial divisions of life. These little celebrations are æras, that we use as marking posts, from which we set out on some new course.'

'But as to Kate's books?' said Lady Belfield. 'We have,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'too many elementary books. They are read too much and too long. The youthful mind, which was formerly sick from inanition, is now in danger from a plethora.

'Much, however, will depend on capacity and disposition. A child of slower parts may be indulged till nine years old with books which a lively genius will look down upon at seven. A girl of talents *will* read. To *her* no excitement is wanting. The natural appetite is a sufficient incentive. The less brilliant child requires the allurement of lighter books. She wants encouragement as much as the other requires restraint.'

'But don't you think,' said Lady Belfield, 'that they are of great use in attracting children to love reading?' 'Doubtless they are,' said Mr. Stanley. 'The misfortune is, that the stimulants used to attract at first must be not only continued but heightened, to keep up the attraction. These books are novels in miniature, and the excess of them will lead to the want of novels at full length. The early use of savory dishes is not usually followed by an ap-

petite for plain food. To the taste thus pampered, history becomes dry, grammar laborious, and religion dull.

'My wife, who was left to travel through the wide expanse of universal history, and the dreary deserts of Rapin and Mezerai, is, I will venture to assert, more completely skilled in ancient French, and English history, than any of the girls who have been fed, or rather starved on extracts and abridgements. I mean not to recommend the two last named authors for very young people. They are dry and tedious, and children in our days have opportunities of acquiring the same knowledge with less labour. We have brighter, I wish I could say safer lights. Still fact, and not wit is the leading object of history.

'Mrs. Stanley says, that the very tediousness of her historians had a good effect: they were a ballast to her levity, and a discipline to her mind, of which she has felt the benefit in her subsequent life.

'But to return to the mass of children's books. The too great profusion of them protracts the imbecility of childhood; they arrest the understanding instead of advancing it; they give forwardness without strength; they hinder the mind from making vigorous shoots, teach it to stoop when it should soar, and to contract when it should expand; yet I allow that many of them are delightfully amusing and to a certain degree instructive; but they must not be used as the basis of instruction, but sparingly used at all as refreshment from labour.'

'They inculcate morality and good actions surely,' said Lady Belfield. 'It is true,' replied Mr. Stanley,' 'but they often inculcate them on a worldly principle, and rather teach the pride of virtue, and the profit of virtue, than point out the motive of virtue, and the principle of sin. They reprobate bad actions as evil and injurious to others, but not as an offence against the Almighty. Whereas the Bible comes with a plain, straight-forward, simple, but powerful principle—'How shall I do this great wickedness against *God?*' Against *Thee*, *Thee* only have I sinned, and done this evil in *thy* sight.'

'Even children should be taught that when a man has committed the greatest possible crime against his fellow creature, still the offence against God is what will strike a true penitent with the most deep remorse. All morality which is not drawn from this scriptural source is weak, defective, and hollow. These entertaining authors seldom ground their stories on any intimation that human nature is corrupt; that the young reader is helpless and wants assistance; that he is guilty and wants pardon.'

'Surely, my dear Mr. Stanley,' said Lady Belfield, 'though I do not object to the truth and reasonableness of any thing you have said, I cannot think that these things can possibly be made intelligible to children.'

'The framers of our catechism, Madam, thought otherwise,' replied Mr. Stanley. 'The catechism was written for children, and contains all the seeds and principles of Christianity for men. It evidently requires much explanation, much developement; still it furnishes a wide and important field for colloquial instruction, without which young persons can by no means understand a composition so amiable, but so condensed. The catechism speaks expressly of a 'death unto sin'—of 'a new birth unto righteousness'—of 'being born in sin'—of 'being the children of wrath'—of becoming 'the children of grace'—of 'forsaking sin by repentance'—of 'believing the promise of God by faith.' Now, while children are studying these great truths in the catechism, they are probably, at the same time, almost constantly reading some of those entertaining stories which are grounded and built on a quite opposite principle, and do not even imply the existence of any such fundamental truths.'

'Surely,' interrupted Lady Belfield, 'you would not have these serious doctrines brought forward in story books?'

'By no means, Madam,' replied Mr. Stanley. 'but I will venture to assert that even story books should not be found on a principle directly *contradictory* to them, nay, totally *subversive* of them. The Arabian Nights, and other oriental books of fable, though loose and faulty in many respects, yet have always a reference to the religion of the country. Nothing is introduced against the law of Mahomet: nothing subversive of the opinions of a Mussulman. I do not quarrel with books, for having *no* religion, but for having a *false* religion. A book which in nothing opposes the principle of the Bible, I would be far from calling a bad book, though the Bible was never named in it.'

Lady Belfield observed, 'That she was sorry to say her children found religious studies very dry and tiresome; though she took great pains, and made them learn by heart a multitude of questions and answers, a variety of catechisms and explanations, and the best abridgments of the Bible.'

'My dear Lady Belfield,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'you have fully accounted for the dryness and dulness of which you complain. Give them the *Bible itself*. I never yet knew a child who did not delight in the Bible histories, and who would not desire to hear them again and again. From the histories, Mrs. Stanley and I proceed with them to the parables; and from them to the miracles, and a few of the most striking prophecies. When they have acquired a good deal of this desultory knowledge, we begin to weave the parts into a whole. The little girl who had the honour of dining with you to-day, has begun this morning to read the Scriptures with her mother systematically. We shall soon open to her something of the *scheme* of Christianity, and explain how those miracles and prophecies confirm the truth of that religion in which she is to be more fully instructed.

'Upon their historical knowledge, which they acquired by picking out the most interesting stories, we endeavour to ground principles to enlighten their minds, and precepts to influence their conduct. With the genuine language of Scripture I have taken particular care they shall be well acquainted, by digging for the ore in its native bed. While they have been studying the stories, their minds have at the same time been imbued with the impressive phraseology of Scripture. I make a great point

of this, having often seen this useful impression effectually prevented by a multitude of subsidiary histories, and explanations, which too much supersede the use of the original text.

'Only observe,' continued he, 'what divine sentiments, what holy precepts, what devout ejaculations, what strokes of self-abasement, what flights of gratitude, what transports of praise, what touches of penitential sorrow, are found comprised in some one short sentence woven into almost every part of the historical scriptures! observe this, and then confess what a pity it is that children should be commonly set to read the history in a meagre abridgment, stripped of those gems with which the original is so richly inlaid! These histories and expositions become very useful afterwards to young people who are thoroughly conversant with the Bible itself.'

Sir John observed, that he had been struck with the remarkable *disinterestedness* of Mr. Stanley's daughters, and their indifference to things about which most children were so eager. 'Selfishness,' said Mr. Stanley, 'is the hydra we are perpetually combating; but the monster has so much vitality, that new heads spring up as fast as the old ones are cut off. *To counteract selfishness, that inborn, inbred mischief, I hold to be the great art of education.* Education therefore, cannot be adequately carried on, except by those who are deeply convinced of the doctrine of human corruption. This evil principle, as it shows itself early, must be early lopped, or the rapid shoots it makes will, as your favourite Eve observes,

'Soon mock our scant manuring.'

'This counteraction,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'is not like an art or a science, which is to be taken up at set times, and laid aside till the allotted period of instruction returns; but as the evil shows itself at all times, and in all shapes, the *whole force* of instruction is to be bent against it. Mrs. Stanley and I endeavour that not one reward we bestow, not one gratification we afford, shall be calculated to promote it. Gratifications children ought to have. The appetites and inclinations should be reasonably indulged. We are only cautious not to employ them as *the instruments of recompense*, which would look as if we valued them highly, and thought them a fit remuneration for merit. I would rather show a little indulgence to sensuality *as* sensuality, than make it the reward of goodness, which seems to be the common way. While I indulged the appetite of a child, I would never hold out that indulgence which I granted to the lowest, the animal part of his nature, as a payment for the exertion of his mental or moral faculties.'

'You have one great advantage,' said Sir John, 'and I thank God it is the same in Cavendish-square, that you and Mrs. Stanley draw evenly together. Nothing impedes domestic regulations so effectually as where parents, from difference of sentiment, ill-humour, or bad judgment, obstruct each other's plans, or where one parent makes the other insignificant in the eyes of their children.'

'Mr. Reynolds,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'a friend of mine in this neighbourhood, is in this very predicament. To the mother's weakness the father's temperate discipline seems cruelty. She is perpetually blaming him before the children for setting them to their books. Her attentions are divided between their health, which is perfect, and their pleasure, which is obstructed by her foolish zeal to promote it, far more than by his prudent restrictions. Whatever the father helps them to at table, the mother takes from them lest it should make them sick. What he forbids is always the very thing which is good for them. She is much more afraid, however, of overloading their *memories* than their stomachs. Reading, she says, will spoil the girls' eyes, stooping to write, will ruin their chests, and working will make them round shouldered. If the boys run, they will have fevers; if they jump, they will sprain their ankles; if they play at cricket, a blow may kill them; if they swim, they will be drowned, the shallowness of the stream is no argument of safety.

'Poor Reynolds's life is one continued struggle between his sense of duty to his children, and his complaisance to his wife. If he carries his point, it is at the expense of his peace; if he relaxes, as he commonly does, his children are the victims. He is at length brought to submit his excellent judgment to her feeble mind, lest his opposition should hurt her health: and he has the mortification of seeing his children trained as if they had nothing but bodies.

'To the wretched education of Mrs. Reynolds herself all this mischief may be attributed; for she is not a bad, though an ignorant woman; and having been harshly treated by her own parents, she fell into the vulgar error of vulgar minds, that of supposing the opposite of wrong must necessarily be right. As she found that being perpetually contradicted had made herself miserable, she concluded that never being contradicted at all would make her children happy. The event has answered as might have been foreseen. Never was a more discontented, disagreeing, troublesome family. The gratification of one want instantly creates a new one. And it is only when they are quite worn out with having done nothing, that they take refuge in their books, as less wearisome than idleness.'

Sir John, turning to Lady Belfield, said in a very tender tone, 'My dear Caroline, this story, in its principal feature, does not apply to us. We concur completely, it is true, but I fear we concur by being both wrong; we both err by excessive indulgence. As to the case in point, while children are young, they may perhaps lean to the parent who spoils them; but I have never yet seen an instance of young persons, where the parents differed, who did not afterwards discover a much stronger affection for the one who had reasonably restrained them, than for the other, whose blind indulgence had at once diminished her importance and their own reverence.'

I observed to Mr. Stanley, that as he had so noble a library, and wished to inspire his children with the love of literature, I was surprised to see their apartment so slenderly provided with books.

'This is the age of excess in every thing,' replied he; 'nothing is a gratification of which

the want has not been previously felt. The wishes of children are all so anticipated, that they never experience the pleasure excited by wanting and waiting. Of their initiatory books they *must* have a pretty copious supply. But as to books of entertainment or instruction of a higher kind, I never allow them to possess one of their own, till they have attentively read and improved by it; this gives them a kind of title to it; and that desire of property so natural to human creatures, I think stimulates them in despatching books which are in themselves a little dry. Expectation with them, as with men, quickens desire, while possession deadens it.'

By this time the children had exhausted all the refreshments set before them, and had retreated to a little farther distance, where, without disturbing us, they freely enjoyed their innocent gambols—playing, singing, laughing, dancing, reciting verses, trying which could puzzle the other in the name of plants, of which they pulled single leaves to increase the difficulty, all succeeded each other. Lady Belfield looking consciously at me, said, 'These are the creatures whom I foolishly suspected of being made miserable by restraint, and gloomy through want of indulgence.'

'After long experience,' said Mr. Stanley, 'I will venture to pronounce, that not all the anxious cutting out of pleasure, not all the costly indulgences which wealth can procure, not all the contrivances of inventive man for his darling youthful offspring, can find out an amusement so pure, so natural, so cheap, so rational, so healthful, I had almost said so religious, as that unbought pleasure connected with a garden.'

Kate and Celia, who had for some time been peeping into the bower in order to catch an interval in the conversation, as soon as they found our attention disengaged, stole in among us; each took the fond father by a hand, and led him to the turf seat. Phœbe presented him a book which he opened, and out of it read with infinite humour, grace and gaiety, *The diverting History of John Gilpin*. This it seems was a pleasure to which they had been led to look forward for some time, but which, in honour of Kate, had been purposely withheld till this memorable day. His little auditors, who grouped themselves round him on the grass, were nearly convulsed with laughter, nor were the tenants of the bower much less delighted.

As we walked into the house, Mr. Stanley said, 'Whenever I read to my children a light and gay composition, which I often do, I generally take care it shall be the work of some valuable author, to whose writings this shall be a pleasant and a tempting prelude. What child of spirit who hears John Gilpin, will not long to be thought old and wise enough to read the 'Task?' The remembrance of the infant rapture will give a predilection for the poet. Desiring to keep their standard high, I accustom them to none but good writers, in every sense of the word; by this means they will be less likely to stoop to ordinary ones when they shall hereafter come to choose for themselves.'

Lady Belfield regretted to me that she had not brought some of her children to the Grove: 'To confess a disgraceful truth,' said she, 'I was afraid they would have been moped to death; and to confess another truth still more disgraceful to my authority, my indulgence has been so injudicious, and I have maintained so little control, that I durst not bring some of them for fear of putting the rest out of humour; I am now in a school, where I trust I may learn to acquire firmness, without any diminution of fondness.'

CHAP. XXVI.

The next morning Mr. Stanley proposed that we should pay a visit to some of his neighbours. He and Sir John Belfield rode on horseback, and I had the honour of attending the ladies in the sociable. Lady Belfield, who was now become desirous of improving on her own too relaxed domestic system, by the experience of Mrs. Stanley, told her how much she admired the cheerful obedience of her children. She said, 'she did not so much wonder to see them so good, but she owned she was surprised to see them so happy.'

'I know not,' replied Mrs. Stanley, 'whether the increased insubordination of children is owing to the new school of philosophy and politics, but it seems to me to make part of the system. When I go sometimes to stay with a friend in town to do business, she is always making apologies that she cannot go out with me—'her daughters want the coach.' If I ask leave to see the friends who call on me in such a room, —'her daughters have company there, or they want the room for their music, or it is preparing for the children's ball in the evening.' If a messenger is required—'her daughters want the footman.' There certainly prevails a spirit of independence, a revolutionary spirit, a separation from the parent state. *It is the children's world.*'

'You remind me, Madam,' said I, 'of an old courtier, who being asked by Louis XV. which age he preferred, his own or the present, replied, 'Sire, I passed my youth in respecting old age, and I find I must now pass my old age in respecting children.'

'In some other houses,' said Mrs. Stanley, 'where we visit, besides that of poor Mr. Reynolds, the children seem to have all the accommodations; and I have observed that the convenience and comfort of the father is but a subordinate consideration. The respectful terms of address are nearly banished from the vocabulary of children, and the somewhat too orderly manner which once prevailed is superceded by an incivility, a roughness, a want of attention, which is surely not better than the harmless formality which it has driven out.'

Just as she had said this, we stopt at Mr. Reynolds' gate; neither he nor his lady were at home. Mr. Stanley, who wished to show us a fine reach of the river from the drawing-room window, desired the servant to show us into it. There we beheld a curious illustration of what we had heard. In the ample bow-window lay a confused heap of the glittering spoils of the most expensive toys.—Before the rich silk chairs knelt two of the children, in the act of rapidly

demolishing their fine painted play-things; 'others sat apart on *the floor* retired,' and more deliberately employed in picking to pieces their little gaudy works of art. A pretty girl who had a beautiful wax doll on her lap, almost as big as herself, was pulling out its eyes, that she might see how they were put in. Another, weary of this costly baby, was making a little doll of rags. A turbulent looking boy was tearing out the parchment from a handsome new drum, that he might see, as he told us, where the noise came from. These I forgave, they had meaning in their mischief.

Another, having kicked about a whole little gilt library, was sitting, with the decorated pages torn asunder at his feet, reading a little dirty penny book, which the kitchen maid had bought of a hawker at the door.—The Persian carpet was strewed with the broken limbs of a painted horse, almost as large as a poney, while the discontented little master was riding astride on a long rough stick. A bigger boy, after having broken the pannels of a fine gilt coach, we saw afterwards in the court-yard, nailing together a few dirty bits of ragged elm boards, to make himself a wheel-barrow.

'Not only the disciple of the fastidious Jean Jacques,' exclaimed I, 'but the sound votary of truth and reason, must triumph, at such an instance of the satiety of riches, and the weariness of ignorance and idleness.—One such practical instance of the insufficiency of affluence to *bestow* the pleasures which industry must *buy*;—one such actual exemplification of the folly of supposing that injudicious profusion and mistaken fondness can supply that pleasure which must be worked out before it can be enjoyed, is worth a whole folio of argument or exhortation.'—The ill-bred little flock paid no attention to us, and only returned a rude 'n—o' or 'yes' to our questions.[2]

'Caroline,' said Sir John; 'these painted ruins afford a good lesson for us. We must desire our rich uncles and our generous god-mothers to make an alteration in their presents, if they cannot be prevailed upon to withhold them.'

'It is a sad mistake,' said Mr. Stanley, 'to suppose that youth wants to be so incessantly amused. They want not pleasures to be chalked out for them. Lay a few cheap and coarse materials in their way, and let their own busy inventions be suffered to work. They have abundant pleasure in the mere freshness and novelty of life, its unbroken health, its elastic spirit, its versatile temper, and its ever new resources.'

'So it appears, Stanley,' said Sir John, 'when I look at your little group of girls, recluses as they are called. How many cheap yet lively pleasures do they seem to enjoy!—their successive occupations, their books, their animating exercise, their charitable rounds, their ardent friendships, the social table at which the elder ones are companions, not mutes; the ever-varying pleasures of their garden,

'Increasing virtue and approving heaven.'

While we were sitting with Lady Aston, on whom we next called, Mr. Stanley suddenly exclaimed, 'The Miss Flams are coming up the gravel walk!' Lady Aston looked vexed, but correcting herself, said Mr. Stanley, we owe this visit to you, or rather to your friend,' bowing to me; 'they saw your carriage stop here, or they would not have done so dull a thing as to have called on me.'

These new guests presented a new scene very uncongenial to the timid and tranquil spirit of the amiable hostess. There seemed to be a contest between the sisters, who should be most eloquent, most loud, or most inquisitive. They eagerly attacked me all at once, as supposing me to be overflowing with intelligence from the metropolis, a place which they not only believed to contain exclusively all that was worth seeing, but all that was worth hearing. The rest of the world they considered as a barren wilderness, of which the hungry inhabitants could only be kept from starving, by such meagre aliment as the occasional reports of its pleasures, fashions, and anecdotes, which might now and then be conveyed by some stray traveller, might furnish.

'It is so strange to us,' said Miss Bell, 'and so monstrously dull and vulgar, to be in the country at this time of the year, that we don't know what to do with ourselves.'

'As to the time of year, Madam,' said I, 'if ever one would wish to be in the country at all, surely this month is the point of perfection. The only immoral thing with which I could ever charge our excellent Sovereign is, that he was born in June, and has thus furnished his fashionable subjects with a loyal pretence for encountering 'the sin and sea-coal of London,' to borrow Will Honeycomb's phrase, in the finest month of the twelve. But where that is the real motive with one, it is the pretence of a thousand.'

'How can you be so shocking? said she; 'but papa is really grown so cross and so stingy, as to prevent our going to town at all these last two or three years; and for so mean a reason that I am ashamed to tell you.' Out of politeness I did not press to know; I needed not, for she was resolved I should 'not burst in ignorance.'

She went on—'Do you know he pretends that times are hard, and public difficulties increasing; and he declares that whatever privations we endure, government must be supported: so that he says, it is right to draw in, in the only way in which he can do it honestly; I am sure it is not doing it creditably. Did you ever hear any thing so shabby?' 'Shabby, Madam,' replied I; 'I honour a gentleman who has integrity enough to do a right thing, and good sense enough not to be ashamed to own it.'

'Yes, but papa need not. The steward declares, if he would only raise his tenants a very little, he would have more than enough; but papa is inflexible. He says my brother must do as he pleases when he comes to the estate, but that he himself promised, when he came into possession, that he would never raise the rents, and that he will never be worse than his word.' As I could not find it in my heart to join in abusing a gentleman for resolving never to be worse than his word, I was silent.

She then inquired, with more seriousness, if there were any prospect of peace. I was better pleased with this question, as it implied more anxiety for the lives of her fellow creatures, than I had given her credit for. 'I am anxiously looking into all the papers,' continued she, without giving me time to speak, 'because as soon as there is peace, papa has promised we shall go to town again. If it was not for that, I should not care if there was war till doomsday, for what with marching regiments, and militia, and volunteers, nothing can be pleasanter than it makes the country, I mean as far as the country *can* be pleasant.' They then ran over the names and respective merits of every opera singer, every dancer, and every actor, with incredible volubility; and I believe they were not a little shocked at my slender acquaintance with the nomenclature, and the little interest I took in the criticisms they built upon it.

Poor Lady Aston looked oppressed and fatigued, but inwardly rejoiced, as she afterwards owned to me, that her daughters were not within hearing. I was of a different opinion, upon the Spartan principle, of making their children sober, by the spectacle of the intoxicated Helots. Miss Bell's eloquence seemed to make but little impression on Sir George; or rather it produced an effect directly contrary to admiration. His good taste seemed to revolt at her flippancy. Every time I see this young man he rises in my esteem. His ingenuous temper and engaging modesty set off to advantage a very fair understanding.

In our way home we were accosted by Mr. Flam. After a rough but hearty salutation, and cordial invitation to come and dine with him, he galloped off, being engaged on business. 'This is an honest country 'squire of the old cut,' said Mr. Stanley afterwards. 'He has a very good estate, which he has so much delight in managing, that he has no pleasure in any thing else. He was prevailed on by his father to marry his present wife for no other reason than because her estate joined to his, and broke in a little on the *arrondissement;* but it was judged that both being united, all might be brought within a ring fence. This was thought a reason sufficiently powerful for the union of two immortal beings, whose happiness here and hereafter might be impeded or promoted by it. The felicity of the connection has been in exact proportion to the purity of the motive.'

I could not forbear interrupting Mr. Stanley, by observing that nothing had surprised or hurt me more in the little observation I had made on the subject of marriage, than the frequent indifference of parents to the moral, and especially to the religious character of the man who proposed himself. 'That family, fortune, and connections should have their full share in the business, I readily admit,' added I; 'but that it should ever form the chief, often the only ground of acceptance, has, I confess, lowered mankind in my esteem more completely, than almost any other instance of ambition, avarice, or worldliness. That a very young girl, who has not been carefully educated, should be captivated by personal advantages, and even infatuated by splendour, is less surprising, than that parents, who having themselves experienced the inefficiency of riches to happiness—that they should be eagerly impatient to part from a beloved daughter, reared with fondness at least, if not with wisdom, to a man of whose principles they have any doubt, and of whose mind they have a mean opinion, is a thing I cannot understand. And yet what proposal almost is rejected on this ground?' Lucilla's eyes at this moment shone with such expressive brightness, that I exultingly said to myself, 'Lord Staunton! I defy thee!'

'The mischief of this lax principle is of wide extent,' replied Mr. Stanley. 'When girls are continually hearing what an advantageous, what a desirable marriage such a young friend has made, with a man so rich, so splendid, so great; though they have been accustomed to hear this very man condemned for his profligacy, perhaps, at least they know him to be destitute of piety—when they hear that these things are not considered as any great objection to the union, what opinion must these girls form, not only of the maxims by which the world is governed, but of the truth of that religion which those persons profess?

'But to return to Mr. Flam. He passed through the usual course of education, but has profited so little by it, that though he has a certain natural shrewdness in his understanding, I believe he has scarcely read a book these twenty years, except Burn's Justice and 'The Agricultural Reports.' Yet when he wants to make a figure he now and then lards his discourse with a scrap of thread-bare Latin which he used to steal in his school boy exercises. He values himself on his integrity, and is not destitute of benevolence. These, he says, are the sum and substance of religion; and though I combat this mistaken notion as often as he puts it in my power, yet I must say that some who make more profession would do well to be as careful in these points. He often contrasts himself with his old friend Ned Tyrrel, and is proud of showing how much better a man he is without religion, than Ned is with all his pretensions to it. It is by thus comparing ourselves with worse men, that we grow vain, and with more fortunate men that we become discontented.

'All the concern he gives himself about his wife and daughters is, that they shall not run him in debt; and indeed he is so liberal, that he does not drive them to the necessity. In every thing else, they follow their own devices. They teazed him, however, to let them spend two or three winters in town, the mother hinting *that it would answer.* He was prevailed on to try it as a speculation, but the experiment failed. He now insists that they shall go no more till the times mend, to any of the advertising places, such as London, Brighton, or Bath: he says, that attending so many fairs and markets is very expensive, especially as the girls don't go off. He will now see what can be done by private contract at home, without the cost of journeys, with fresh keep and trimming, and docking into the bargain. They must now take their chance among country dealers; and provided they will give him a son-in-law, whose estate is free from incumbrances, who pays his

debts, lives within his income, does not rack his tenants, never drinks claret, hates the French, and loves field sports, he will ask no more questions.'

I could not but observe, how perferable the father's conduct, with all its faults, was to that of the rest of the family. 'I had imagined,' said I, 'that this coarse character was quite out of print. Though it is religiously bad, and of course morally defective, yet it is so politically valuable, that I should not be sorry to see a new edition of these obsolete squires, somewhat corrected, and better lettered.'

'All his good qualities,' said Mr. Stanley, 'for want of religion, have a flaw in them. His good nature is so little directed by judgment, that while it serves the individual, it injures the public. As a brother magistrate, I am obliged to act in almost constant opposition to him, and his indiscretions do more mischief, by being of a nature to increase his popularity. He is fully persuaded that occasional intoxication is the best reward for habitual industry; and insists that it is good old English kindness, to make the church ringers periodically tipsy at the holidays, though their families starve for it the whole week. He and I have a regular contest at the annual village fairs, because he insists that my refusing to let them begin on a Sunday is abridging their few rights, and robbing them of a day which they might add to their pleasure, without injury to their profit. He allows all the strolling players, mountebanks, and jugglers to exhibit, because he says, it is a charity. His charity, however, is so short-sighted, that he does not see, that while these vagabonds are supplying the wants of the day, their improvident habits suffer them to look no farther: that his own workmen are spending their hard-earned money in these illegal diversions, while the expense is the least mischief which their daughters incur.'

Our next visit was to Mr. Carlton, whom I had found in one or two previous interviews to be a man of excellent sense, and a perfect gentleman. Sir John renewed with pleasure his acquaintance with the husband, while Lady Belfield was charmed to be introduced to the wife, with whose character she was so enamoured, and whose gentle manners were calculated to confirm the affection which her little history had inspired.

CHAP. XXVII

In the morning Mr. Stanley, Sir John Belfield and I took a walk to call on our valuable rector. On our return home, amidst that sort of desultory conversation which a walk often produces, 'Since we left the parsonage, sir,' said I, addressing myself to Mr. Stanley, 'I have been thinking how little justice has been done to the clerical character in those popular works of imagination which are intended to exhibit a picture of living manners. There are, indeed, a very few happy exceptions. Yet I cannot but regret that so many fair occasions have been lost of advancing the interests of religion by personifying her amiable graces in the character of her ministers. I allude not to the attack of the open infidel, nor the sly insinuation of the concealed sceptic, nor do I advert to the broad assault of the enemy of good government, who falling foul of every established institution, would naturally be expected to show little favour to the ministers of the church. But I advert to those less prejudiced and less hostile writers, who having, as I would hope, no political or moral motive for undermining the order, would rather desire to be considered as among its friends and advocates.'

'I understand you,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'I believe that this is often done, not from any disrespect to the sacred function, not from any wish to depreciate an order which even common sense and common prudence, without the intervention of religion, tells us cannot be set in too respectable a light. I believe it commonly arises from a different cause. The writer himself having but a low idea of the requirements of Christianity, is consequently neither able nor willing to affix a very elevated standard for the character of its ministers. Some of these writers, however, describe a clergyman in general terms, as a paragon of piety, but they seldom make him act up to the description with which he sets out. He is represented, in the gross, as adorned with all the attributes of perfection, but when he comes to be drawn out in detail he is found to exhibit little of that superiority which had been ascribed to him in the lump. You are told how religious he is, but when you come to hear him converse you are not always quite certain whether he professes the religion of the Shaster or the Bible. You hear of his moral excellence, but you find him adopting the maxims of the world, and living in the pursuits of ordinary men. In short, you will find that he has little of a clergyman, except the name.'

'A sensible little work of fiction,' replied I, 'lately fell in my way. Among its characters was that of a grave divine. From the strain of panegyric bestowed on him, I expected to have met with a rival to the fathers of the primitive church. He is presented as a model, and, indeed, he counsels, he reproves, he instructs,—but he goes to a masquerade.'

'This assimilation of general piety,' said Mr. Stanley, 'with occasional conformity to the practice of the gay world, I should fear would produce two ill effects. It will lower the professional standard to the young reader while he is perusing the ideal character, and the comparison will dispose him to accuse of forbidding strictness the pious clergyman of real life. After having been entertained with the mixture of religion and laxity in the imaginary divine, whom he has been following from the serious lecture to the scene of revelry, will he not be naturally disposed to accuse of moroseness the existing divine who blends no such contradiction?

'But the evil of which I more particularly complain,' continued he, 'because it exists in works universally read, and written, indeed, with a life and spirit which make them both admired and remembered, is found in the ingenious and popular novels of the witty class. In some of these, even where the author intends

to give a favourable representation of a clergyman, he more frequently exhibits him for the purpose of merriment than for that of instruction.'

'I confess with shame,' said Sir John, 'that the spirit, fire, and knowledge of mankind, of the writers to whom you allude, have made me too generally indulgent to their gross pictures of life, and to the loose morals of their good men.'

'*Good men!*' said Mr. Stanley. 'After reading some of those works in the early part of my life, I amused myself with the idea that I should like to interweave the character of a *Christian* among the heroes of Fielding and Smollet as the shortest way of proving their *good men* to be worthless fellows: and to show how little their admired characters rise in point of morals, above the heroes of the Beggar's Opera.

'Knowledge of the world,' continued he, 'should always be used to mend the world. A writer employs his knowledge honestly when he points out the snares and pitfalls of vice. But when he covers those snares and pitfalls with flowers, when he fascinates in order that he may corrupt, when he engages the affections by polluting them, I know not how a man can do a deeper injury to society, or more fatally inflame his own future reckoning.'

'But to return to our more immediate subject,' said I, 'I cannot relish their singling out the person of a pious clergyman as a peculiarly proper vehicle for the display of humour. Why qualities which excite ridicule should be necessarily blended with such as command esteem, is what I never have been able to comprehend.'

'Even where the characters,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'have been so pleasingly delineated as to attract affection by their worth and benevolence, there is always a drawback from their respectability by some trait that is ludicrous, some situation that is unclerical, some incident that is absurd. There is a contrivance to expose them to some awkward distress; there is some palpable weakness to undo the effect of their general example, some impropriety of conduct, some gross error in judgment, some excess of simplicity, which, by infallibly diminishing the dignity, weakens the influence of the character, and of course lessens the veneration of the reader.'

'I have often,' replied I, 'felt, that though we may love the man we laugh at, we shall never reverence him. We may like him as a companion, but we shall never look up to him as an instructor.'

'I know no reason,' observed Mr. Stanley, 'why a pious divine may not have as much wit and humour as any other man. And we have it on the word of the wittiest of the whole body, Dr. South, that 'piety does not necessarily involve dulness.' An author may lawfully make his churchman as witty as he pleases, or rather as witty as he can: but he should never make him the butt of the wit of other men, which is, in fact, making him the butt of his own wit. What is meant to be a *comical parson* is no respectable or prudent exhibition; nor with the utmost stretch of candour, can I believe that the motive of the exhibitor is always of the purest kind.

'How far,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'authors have found it necessary to add these diverting appendages in order to qualify piety, how far they have been obliged to dilute religion, so as to make it palatable and pardonable, I will not pretend to decide. But whether such a mixture be not calculated to leave a lasting effect on the mind, unfavourable to the clerical character; whether these associations are not injurious even to religion itself, let those declare, if they will speak honestly who have been accustomed to be excessively delighted with such combinations.'

'I am a little afraid,' returned Sir John, 'that I have formerly in some degree fallen under this censure. But surely, Stanley, you would not think it right to lavish *undue* praise, even on characters of a better stamp; you would not commend ordinary merit highly, and above all, you would not, I presume screen the faults of the worthless?'

'I am as far from insisting,' replied he, 'on the universal piety of the clergy, as for bespeaking reverence for the unworthy individual: all that I contend for is, that no arts should ever be employed to discredit the *order*. The abettors of revolutionary principles, a few years ago, had the acuteness to perceive, that so to discredit it was one of the most powerful engines. Had not that spirit been providently extinguished, they would have done more mischief to religion by their artful mode of introducing degrading pictures of our national instructors, in their popular tracts, than the Hobbes and the Bolingbrokes had done by blending irreligion with their philosophy, or the Voltaires and the Gibbons by interweaving it into their history. Whatever is mixed up with our amusements is swallowed with more danger, because with more pleasure, and less suspicion than any thing which comes under a graver name, and more serious shape.'

'I presume,' said Sir John, 'you do not mean to involve in your censure the exquisitely keen satires of Erasmus on the ecclesiastics of his day: and I remember that you yourself could never read without delight, the pointed wit of Boileau against the spiritual voluptuaries of his time, in his admirable *Lutrin*. Perhaps you are not disposed to give the same quarter to the pleasant ridicule of Le Sage?'

'We justify ourselves as good protestants,' rejoined Mr. Stanley, 'for pardoning the severe but just attacks of the reformer and the poet on the vices of a corrupt church.—Though, to speak the truth, I am not quite certain that even these two discriminating and virtuous authors did not, especially Erasmus, now and then indulge themselves in a sharpness which seemed to bear upon religion itself, and not merely on the luxury and idleness of its degenerate ministers.—As to Le Sage, who, with all his wit, I should never have thought of bringing into such good company, he was certainly withheld by no restraints either moral or religious. And it is obvious to me that he seems rather gratified, that he had the faults to expose, than actuated by an honest zeal, by exposing to correct them.'

'I wish I could say,' replied Sir John, 'that the Spanish Friar of Dryden, and the witty Opera of the living Dryden did not fall under the same suspicion. I have often observed, that as Lucien dashes with equal wit and equal viru-

lence at every religion, of every name and every nation, so Dryden with the same diffusive zeal attacks the ministers of every religion. In ransacking muftis, monks, and prelates to confirm his favourite position,

That Priests of all religions are the same,

he betrays a secret wish to intimate that not only the priests of all religions, but the religions of all priests are pretty much alike.'

'He has, however,' said Mr. Stanley, 'made a sort of palinode, by his consummately beautiful poem of the *good parson*.—Yet even this lovely picture he could not allow himself to complete without a fling at the order, which he declares at the conclusion, he only spares for the sake of one exception.'

'Rousseau,' said Sir John, 'seems to be the only sceptic who has not in this respect acted unfairly. His Savoyard vicar is represented as a grave, consistent, and exemplary character.'

'True,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'but don't you perceive why he is so represented? He is exhibited as a model of goodness, in order to exalt the scanty faith and unsound doctrines of which he is the teacher.'

'I would not,' continued he, 'call that man an enemy to the church who should reprobate characters who are a dishonour to it.—But the just though indignant biographer of a real Sterne, or a real Churchill, exhibits a very different spirit, and produces a very different effect from the painter of an imaginary *Thwackum* or *Supple*. In the historian, concealment would be blameable, and palliation mischievous. He fairly exposes the individual without wishing to bring any reproach on the profession. What I blame is, employing the vehicle of fiction for the purpose of blackening, or in any degree discrediting, a body of men, who depend much for the success of their labours on public opinion, and on the success of whose labours depends so large a portion of the public virtue.'

'I have sometimes,' said I, 'heard my father express his surprise that the most engaging of all writers, Mr. Addison, a man so devout himself, so forward to do honour to religion on all occasions, should have let slip so fair an opportunity for exalting the value of a country clergyman as the description of Sir Roger de Coverly's chaplain naturally put in his hands.'*

'You must allow,' said Sir John, 'that he has made him worthy, and that he has not made him absurd.'

'I grant it,' replied I, 'but he has made him dull and acquiescent. He has made him any thing rather than a pattern.'

'But what I most regret,' said Mr. Stanley, 'is, that the use he has made of this character is to give the stamp of his own high authority to a practice, which though it is characteristically recommended by the whimsical knight, whose original vein of humour leaves every other far behind it, yet should never have had the sanction of the author of the Saturday pieces in the Spectator—I mean, the practice of the minister of a little country parish, preaching to farmers and peasants the most learned, logical, and profound discourses in the English language.'

'It has, I believe,' replied Sir John, 'excited general wonder that so consummate a judge of propriety should have commended, as suitable instruction for illiterate villagers, the sermons of those incomparable scholars Fleetwood, South, Tillotson, Barrow, Calamy, and Sanderson.'

'But this is not the worst,' said Mr. Stanley, 'for Mr. Addison not only clearly approves it in the individual instance, but takes occasion from it, to establish a general rule, and indefinitely to advise the country clergy to adopt the custom of preaching these same discourses, '*instead of wasting their spirits in laborious compositions of their own*.'

'Surely,' replied I, 'an enemy of religion could not easily have devised a more effectual method for thinning the village church, or lessening the edification of the unlettered auditor, than this eminent advocate for Christianity has here incautiously suggested.'

'I am sorry,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that such a man has given such a sanction for reducing religious instruction to little more than a form, and for seeming to consider the mere act of attending public worship as the sole end of its institution, without sufficiently taking into the account the nature and the importance of the instruction itself; and without considering that nothing can be edifying which is not intelligible. Besides, it is not only preventing the improvement of the people, but checking that of the preacher. It not only puts a bar to his own advancement in the art of teaching, but retards that growth in piety which might have been promoted in himself while he was preparing in secret to promote that of his hearers.'

'And yet,' replied Sir John, 'to speak honestly, I am afraid, had I been the patron, I should have been so gratified myself with hearing those fine compositions, that I could not heartily have blamed my chaplain for preaching no other.'

'My dear Sir John,' said Mr. Stanley, 'neither your good sense, nor your good nature would, I am persuaded, allow you to purchase your own gratification at the expense of a whole congregation. You, a man of learning and of leisure, can easily supply any deficiency of ability in plain but useful sermons. But how would the tenants, the workmen, and the servants (for of such at least was Sir Roger's congregation composed,) how would those who have little other means of edification indemnify themselves for the loss of that single opportunity which the whole week affords them? Is not that a most inequitable way of proportioning instruction which, while it pleases or profits the well-informed individual, cuts off the instruction of the multitude? If we may twist a text from its natural import, is it 'rightly dividing the word of truth' to feast the patron and starve the parish?'

* See Spectator, Vol. ii. No. 107.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Though Mr. Stanley had checked my impetuosity in my application to him, and did not

encourage my addresses with a promptitude suited to the ardour of my affection, yet as the warmth of my attachment, notwithstanding I made it a duty to restrain its outward expression, could not escape either his penetration, or that of his admirable wife, they began a little to relax in the strictness with which they had avoided speaking of their daughter. They never indeed introduced the subject themselves, yet it some how or other never failed to find its way into all conversation in which I was one of the interlocutors.

Sitting one day in Lucilla's bower with Mrs. Stanley, and speaking, though in general terms, on the subject nearest my heart, with a tenderness and admiration as sincere as it was fervent, I dwelt particularly on some instances which I had recently heard from Edwards, of her tender attention to the sick poor, and her zeal in often visiting them without regard to weather, or the accommodation of a carriage.

'I assure you,' said Mrs. Stanley, 'you overrate her. Lucilla is no prodigy dropped down from the clouds. Ten thousand other young women, with natural good sense, and good temper, might, with the same education, the same neglect of what is useless, and the same attention to what is necessary, acquire the same habits and the same principles. Her being no prodigy, however, perhaps makes her example, as far as it goes, more important. She may be more useful, because she carries not that discouraging superiority, which others might be deterred from imitating, through hopelessness to reach. If she is not a miracle whom others might despair to emulate, she is a Christian whom every girl of a fair understanding and good disposition may equal, and whom, I hope and believe, many girls excel.'

I asked Mrs. Stanley's permission to attend the young ladies in one of their benevolent rounds. 'When I have leisure to be of the party,' replied she, smiling, 'you shall accompany us. I am afraid to trust your warm feelings. Your good nature would perhaps lead you to commend as a merit, what in fact deserves no praise at all, the duty being so obvious, and so indispensable. I have often heard it regretted that ladies have no stated employment, no profession. It is a mistake. *Charity is the calling of a lady; the care of the poor is her profession.* Men have little time or taste for details. Women of fortune have abundant leisure, which can in no way be so properly or so pleasantly filled up, as in making themselves intimately acquainted with the worth and the wants of all within their reach. With their wants, because it is their bounden duty to administer to them; with their worth, because without this knowledge, they cannot administer prudently and appropriately.'

I expressed to Mrs. Stanley the delight with which I had heard of the admirable regulations of her family, in the management of the poor, and how much their power of doing good was said to be enlarged by the judgment and discrimination with which it was done.

'We are far from thinking,' replied she, 'that our charity should be limited to our own immediate neighbourhood. We are of opinion, that it should not be left undone any where, but that *there* it should be done indispensably. We consider our own parish as our more appropriate field of action, where Providence, by 'fixing the bounds of our habitation,' seems to have made us peculiarly responsible for the comfort of those whom he has doubtless placed around us for that purpose. It is thus that the Almighty vindicates his justice, or rather calls on us to vindicate it. It is thus he explains why he admits natural evil into the world, by making the wants of one part of the community an exercise for the compassion of the other.

'Surely,' added Mrs. Stanley, 'the reason is particularly obvious, why the bounty of the affluent ought to be most liberally, though not exclusively, extended to the spot whence they derived their revenues. There seems indeed to be a double motive for it. The same act involves a duty both to God and to man. The largest bounty to the necessitous on our estates, is rather justice than charity. 'Tis but a kind of pepper-corn acknowledgment to the great Lord and proprietor of all, from whom we hold them. And to assist their own labouring poor is a kind of natural debt, which persons who possess great landed property owe to those from the sweat of whose brow they derive their comforts, and even their riches. 'Tis a commutation, in which, as the advantage is greatly on our side, so is our duty to diminish the difference, of paramount obligation.'

I then repeated my request, that I might be allowed to take a practical lesson in the next periodical visit to the cottages.

Mrs. Stanley replied, 'As to my girls, the elder ones, I trust, are such veterans in their trade that your approbation can do them no harm, nor do they stand in need of it as an incentive. But should the little ones find that their charity procures them praise, they might perhaps be charitable for the sake of praise, their benevolence might be set at work by their vanity, and they might be led to do that, from the love of applause, which can only please God when the principle is pure. *The iniquity of our holy things*, my good friend, requires much Christian vigilance. Next to not giving at all the greatest fault is to give from ostentation. The contest is only between two sins. The motive robs the act of the very name of virtue, while the good work that is paid in praise, is stripped of the hope of higher retribution.'

On my assuring Mrs. Stanley, that I thought such an introduction to their systematic schemes of charity might inform my own mind and improve my habits, she consented, and I have since been a frequent witness of their admirable method; and have been studying plans which involve the good both of body and soul. Oh! if I am ever blest with a coadjutress, a directress, let me rather say, formed under such auspices, with what delight shall I transplant the principles and practices of Stanley Grove to the Priory! Nor indeed would I ever marry but with the animating hope that not only myself, but all around me, would be the better and the happier for the presiding genius I shall place there.

Sir John Belfield had joined us while we were on this topic. I had observed sometimes that though he was earnest on the general principle

of benevolence, which he considered as a most imperious duty, or, as he said in his warm way, as so lively a pleasure, that he was almost ready to suspect if it *were* a duty; yet I was sorry to find that his generous mind had not viewed this large subject under all its aspects. He had not hitherto regarded it as a matter demanding any thing but money; while time, inquiry, discrimination, system, he confessed he had not much taken into the account. He did a great deal of good, but had not allowed himself time or thought for the best way of doing it. Charity, as opposed to hard-heartedness and covetousness, he warmly exercised; but when, with a willing liberality, he had cleared himself from the suspicion of those detestable vices, he was indolent in the proper distribution of money and somewhat negligent of its just application. Nor had he ever considered, as every man should do, because every man's means are limited, how the greatest quantity of good could be done with any given sum.

But the worst of all was, he had imbibed certain popular prejudices respecting the more *religious* charities; prejudices altogether unworthy of his enlightened mind. He too much limited his ideas of bounty to bodily wants. This distinction was not with him, as it is with many, invented as an argument for saving his money, which he most willingly bestowed for feeding and clothing the necessitous. But as to the propriety of affording them religious instruction, he owned he had not made up his mind. He had some doubts whether it were a duty. Whether it were a benefit, he had still stronger doubts; adding, that he should begin to consider the subject more attentively than he had yet done.

Mrs. Stanley in reply, said, 'I am but a poor casuist, Sir John, and I must refer you to Mr. Stanley for abler arguments than I can use. I will venture however to say, that even on your own ground it appears to be a pressing duty. If sin be the cause of so large a portion of the miseries of human life, must not that be the noblest charity which cures, or lessens, or prevents sin? And are not they the truest benefactors even to the bodies of men, who by their religious exertions to prevent the corruption of vice, prevent also, in some measure, that poverty and disease which are the natural concomitants of vice? If in endeavouring to make men better, by the infusion of a religious principle which shall check idleness, drinking, and extravagance, we put them in the way to become healthier, and richer, and happier, it will furnish a practical argument which I am sure will satisfy your benevolent heart.'

CHAP. XXIX.

Mr. Tyrrel and his nephew called on us in the evening, and interrupted a pleasant and useful conversation, on which we were just entering.

'Do you know, Stanley,' 'said Mr. Tyrrel, 'that you have absolutely corrupted my nephew, by what passed at your house the other day in favour of reading. He has ever since been ransacking the shelves for idle books.'

'I should be seriously concerned,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'if any thing I had said should have drawn Mr. Edward off from more valuable studies, or diverted him from the important pursuit of religious knowledge.'

'Why to do him justice, and you too,' resumed Mr. Tyrrel, 'he has since that conversation begun assiduously to devote his mornings to serious reading, and it is only an hour's leisure in the evening which he used to trifle away, that he gives to books of taste; but I had rather he would let them all alone. The best of them will only fill his heart with cold morality, and stuff his head with romance and fiction. I would not have a religious man ever look into a book of your *belles lettres* nonsense; and if he be really religious, he will make a general bonfire of the poets.'

'That is rather two sweeping a sentence,' said Mr. Stanley. 'It would, I grant you, have been a benefit to mankind, if the entire works of some celebrated poets, and a considerable portion of the works of many not quite so exceptionable, were to assist the conflagration of your pile.'

'And if fuel failed,' said Sir John Belfield, 'we might not only rob Belinda's altar of her

Twelve tomes of French romances neatly gilt,

but feed the flame with countless marble covered octavos from the modern school.—But having made this concession, allow me to observe, that because there has been a voluptuous Petronius, a profane Lucretius, and a licentious Ovid, to say nothing of the numberless modern poets, or rather individual poems, that are immoral and corrupt—shall we therefore exclude all works of imagination from the library of a young man? Surely we should not indiscriminately banish the Muses, as infallible corruptors of the youthful mind; I would rather consider a blameless poet as the auxiliary of virtue.—Whatever talent enables a writer to possess an empire over the heart, and to lead the passions at his command puts it in his power to be of no small service to mankind. It is no new remark that the abuse of any good thing is no argument against its legitimate use. Intoxication affords no just reason against the use of wine, nor prodigality against the possession of wealth. In the instance in dispute I should rather infer that a talent capable of diffusing so much mischief was susceptible of no small benefit. That it has been so often abused by its misapplication, is one of the highest instances of the ingratitude of man for one of the highest gifts of God.'

'I cannot think,' said I, 'that the Almighty conferred such a faculty with a wish to have it extinguished. Works of imagination have in many countries been a chief instrument of civilization. Poetry has not only preceded science in the history of human progress, but it has in many countries preceded the knowledge of the mechanical arts; and I have somewhere read, that in Scotland they could write elegant Latin verse before they could make a wheel-barrow. For my own part, in my late visit to London, I thought the decline of poetry no favourable symptom.'

'I rejoice to hear it is declining,' said Tyrrel. 'I hope that what is decaying, may in time be extinguished.'

'Mr. Tyrrel would have been delighted with what I was displeased,' replied I, 'I met with philosophers, who were like Plato in nothing but in his abhorrence of the Muses; with politicians, who resembled Burleigh only in his enmity to Spenser; and with warriors, who however they might emulate Alexander in his conquests, would never have imitated him in sparing 'the house of Pindarus.'

'The *art* of poetry,' said Mr. Stanley, 'is to touch the passions, and its *duty* to lead them on the side of virtue. To raise and to purify the amusements of mankind; to multiply and to exalt pleasures, which being purely intellectual, may help to exclude such as are gross, in beings so addicted to sensuality, is surely not only to give pleasure, but to render service. It is allowable to seize every avenue to the heart of a being so prone to evil; to rescue him by every fair means not only from the degradation of vice, but from the dominion of idleness. I do not now speak of gentlemen of the sacred function, to which Mr. Edward Tyrrel aspires, but of those who, having no profession, have no stated employment; and who, having more leisure, will be in danger of exceeding the due bounds in the article of amusement. Let us then endeavour to allure our youth of fashion from the low pleasures of the dissolute; to snatch them, not only from the destruction of the gaming-table, but from the excesses of the dining-table, by inviting them to an elegant delight that is safe, and especially by enlarging the range of pure mental pleasure.

'In order to this, let us do all we can to cultivate their taste, and innocently indulge their fancy. Let us contend with impure writers, those deadliest enemies to the youthful mind, by opposing to them in the chaster author, images more attractive, wit more acute, learning more various; in all which excellencies our first-rate poets certainly excel their vicious competitors.'

'Would you, Mr. Tyrrel,' said Sir John, 'throw into the enemy's camp all the light arms which often successfully annoy where the heavy artillery cannot reach?'

'Let us,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'rescue from the hands of the profane and the impure, the monopoly of wit which they affect to possess, and which they would possess, if no good men had written works of elegant literature, and if all good men totally despised them.'

'For my own part,' said Mr. Tyrrel, 'I believe that a good man, in my sense of the word, will neither write works of imagination, nor read them.'

'At your age and mine, and better employed as we certainly may be,' said Mr. Stanley, 'we want no such resources. I myself, though I strongly retain the relish, have little leisure for the indulgence, which yet I would allow, though with great discrimination, to the young and the unoccupied. What is to whet the genius of the champions of virtue, so as to enable them successfully to combat the leaders of vice and infidelity, if we refuse to let them be occasionally sharpened and polished by such studies? That model of brilliant composition, Bishop Jeremy Taylor, was of this opinion, when he said 'by whatever instrument piety is advantaged, use that, though thou grindest thy spears and arrows at the forges of the Philistines.'

'I know,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'that a Christian need not borrow weapons of attack or defence from the classic armoury; but, to drop all metaphor, if he is called upon to defend truth and virtue against men whose minds are adorned with all that is elegant, strengthened with all that is powerful, and enriched with all that is persuasive, from the writers in question—Is he likely to engage with due advantage if his own mind be destitute of the embellishments with which their's abound? While wit and imagination are *their* favourite instruments, shall we consider the aid of either as useless, much less as sinful in their opponents?'

'While young men *will* be amused,' said Sir John, 'it is surely of importance that they should be *safely* amused. We should not therefore wish to obliterate in authors such faculties as wit and fancy, nor to extinguish a taste for them in readers.'

'Show me any one instance of good that ever was effected by any one poet,' said Mr. Tyrrel, 'and I will give up the point; while on the other hand, a thousand instances of mischief might doubtless be produced.'

'The latter part of your assertion, Sir,' said I, 'I fear is too true: but to what evil has elevation of fancy led Milton, or Milton his readers? In what labyrinths of guilt did it involve Spenser or Cowley? Has Thomson, or has Young added to the crimes or the calamities of mankind? Into what immoralities did it plunge Gay or Goldsmith? Has it tainted the purity of Beattie in his Minstrel, or that of the living minstrel of the Lay? What reader has Mason corrupted, or what reader has Cowper not benefitted? Milton was an enthusiast both in religion and politics. Many enthusiasts with whom he was connected, doubtless condemned the exercise of his imagination in his immortal poem as a crime; but his genius was too mighty to be restrained by opposition, and his imagination too vast and powerful to be kept down by a party. Had he confined himself in his prose writings, weighty and elaborate as some of them are, how little service would he have done the world, and how little would he now be read or quoted! In his life time politics might blind his enemies, and fanaticism his friends. But now, who, comparatively, reads the Iconoclastes? Who does not read Comus?'

'What then,' said Mr. Tyrrel, 'you would have our young men spend their time in reading idle verses, and our girls, I suppose, in reading loose romances?'

'It is to preserve both from evils which I deprecate,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that I would consign the most engaging subjects to the best hands, and raise the taste of our youth, by allowing a little of their leisure, and of their leisure only, to such amusements; and that chiefly with a view to disengage them from worse pursuits. It is not romance, but indolence; it is not poetry, but sensuality, which are the pre-

vailing evils of the day—evils far more fatal in themselves, far more durable in their effects, than the perusal of works of wit and genius. Imagination will cool of itself. The effervescence of fancy will soon subside; but absorbing dissipation, but paralyzing idleness, but degrading self-love,

Grows with their growth, and strengthens with their strength.

'A judicious reformer,' said Sir John, 'will accommodate his remedy to an existing and not an imaginary evil. When the old romances, the grand Cyruses, the Clelias, the Cassandras, the Pharamonds, and the Amadises, had turned all the young heads in Europe; or when the fury of knight errantry demanded the powerful reign of Cervantes to check it—it was a duty to attempt to lower the public delirium. When, in our own age and country, Sterne wrote his corrupt but too popular lesser work, he became the mischievous founder of the school of sentiment. A hundred writers communicated, a hundred thousand readers caught the infection. Sentimentality was the disease which then required to be expelled. The reign of Sterne is past. Sensibility is discarded, and with it the softness which it must be confessed belonged to it. Romance is vanished, and with it the heroic, though somewhat unnatural elevation which accompanied it. We have little to regret in the loss of either: nor have we much cause to rejoice in what we have gained by the exchange. A pervading and subtantial selfishness, the striking characteristic of our day, is no great improvement on the wildness of the old romance, or the vapid puling of the sentimental school.'

'Surely,' said I, (L'Almanac des Gourmands at that instant darting across my mind,) 'it is as honourable for a gentleman to excel in critical as in culinary skill. It is as noble to cultivate the intellectual taste, as that of the palate. It is at least as creditable to discuss the comparative merits of Sophocles and Shakspeare, as the rival ingredients of a soup or a sauce. I will even venture to affirm that it is as dignified an amusement to run a tilt in favour of Virgil or Tasso against their assailants, as to run a barouche against a score of rival barouches; and though I own that, in Gulliver's land of the Houyhnhnms, the keeping up the breed of horses might have been the nobler patriotism, yet in Great Britain it is hitherto at least become no contemptible exertion of skill and industry to keep up the breed of gentlemen.'

CHAP. XXX.

I STROLLED out alone, intending to call at the Rectory, but was prevented by meeting the worthy Doctor Barlow, who was coming to the Grove. I could not lose so fair an opportunity of introducing a subject that was seldom absent from my thoughts. I found it was a subject, on which I had no new discoveries to impart. He told me, he had seen and rejoiced in the election my heart had made. I was surprised at his penetration. He smiled, and told me, 'he took no great credit for his sagacity, in perceiving what was obvious to spectators far more indifferent than himself. That I resembled those animals who by hiding their heads in the earth fancied nobody could see them.'

I asked him a thousand questions about Lucilla, whose fine mind I knew he had in some measure contributed to form. I inquired with an eagerness which he called jealousy, who were her admirers? 'As many men as have seen her,' replied he, 'I know of no man who has so many rivals as yourself. To relieve your apprehensions, however, I will tell you, that though there have been several competitors for her favour, not one has been accepted. There has, indeed, been this summer a very formidable candidate, young Lord Staunton, who has a large estate in the country, and whom she met on a visit.' At these words I felt my fears revive. A young and handsome peer seemed so redoubtable a rival, that for a moment I only remembered she was a woman, and forgot that she was Lucilla.

'You may set your heart at rest,' said Dr. Barlow, who saw my emotion. 'She heard he had seduced the innocent daughter of one of his tenants, under the most specious pretence of honourable love. This, together with the looseness of his religious principles, led her to give his lordship a positive refusal, though he is neither destitute of talents, nor personal accomplishments.'

How ashamed was I of my jealousy! How I felt my admiration increase! Yet I thought it was too great before to admit of augmentation. 'Another proposal,' said Dr. Barlow, 'was made to her father by a man every way unexceptionable. But she desired him to be informed that it was her earnest request, that he would proceed no further, but spare her the pain of refusing a gentleman, for whose character she entertained a sincere respect; but being persuaded she could never be able to feel more than respect, she positively declined receiving his addresses, assuring him at the same time, that she sincerely desired to retain as a friend, him whom she felt herself obliged to refuse as a husband. She is as far from the vanity of seeking to make conquests, as from the ungenerous insolence of using ill, those whom her merit has captivated, and whom her judgment cannot accept.'

After admiring in the warmest terms the purity and generosity of her heart, I pressed Dr. Barlow still farther, as to the interior of her mind. I questioned him as to her early habits, and particularly as to her religious attainments, telling him that nothing was indifferent to me which related to Lucilla.

'Miss Stanley,' replied he, 'is governed by a simple, practical end, in all her religious pursuits. She reads her bible, not from habit, that she may acquit herself of a customary form; nor to exercise her ingenuity by allegorizing literal passages, or spiritualizing plain ones, but that she may improve in knowledge, and grow in grace. She accustoms herself to meditation, in order to get her mind more deeply imbued with a sense of eternal things. She practices self-examination, that she may learn to watch against the first rising of bad dispositions, and to detect

every latent evil in her heart. She lives in the regular habit of prayer; not only that she may implore pardon for sin, but that she may obtain strength against it. She told me one day when she was ill, that if she did not constantly examine the actual state of her mind, she should pray at random, without any certainty what particular sins she should pray against, or what were her particular wants. She has read much scripture and little controversy. There are some doctrines that she does not pretend to define, which she yet practically adopts. She cannot perhaps give you a disquisition on the mysteries of the Holy Spirit, but she can and does fervently implore his guidance and instruction; she believes in his efficacy, and depends on his support. She is sensible that those truths, which from their deep importance are most obvious, have more of the vitality of religion, and influence practice more, than those abstruse points, which unhappily split the religious world into so many parties.

'If I were to name what are her predominant virtues, I should say sincerity and humility. Conscious of her own imperfections, she never justifies her faults, and seldom extenuates them. She receives reproof with meekness, and advice with gratitude. Her own conscience is always so ready to condemn her, that she never wonders, nor takes offence at the censure of others.

'That softness of manner which you admire in her, is not the varnish of good breeding, nor is it merely the effect of good temper, though in both she excels, but it is the result of humility. She appears humble, not because a mild exterior is graceful, but because she has an inward conviction of unworthiness which prevents an assuming manner. Yet her humility has no cant; she never disburthens her conscience by a few disparaging phrases, nor lays a trap for praise by indiscriminately condemning herself. Her humility never impairs her cheerfulness; for the sense of her wants directs her to seek, and her faith enables her to find, the sure foundation of a better hope than any which can be derived from a delusive confidence in her own goodness.

'One day,' continued Dr. Barlow, 'when I blamed her gently for her backwardness in expressing her opinion on some serious point, she said, 'I always feel diffident in speaking on these subjects, not only lest I should be *thought* to assume, but lest I really *should* assume a degree of piety which may not belong to me. My great advantages make me jealous of myself. My dear father so carefully instructed me, and I live so much in the habit of hearing his pious sentiments, that I am often afraid of appearing better than I am, and of pretending to feel in my heart, what perhaps I only approve in my judgment. When my beloved mother was ill,' continued she, 'I often caught myself saying mechanically, 'God's will be done!' when I blushed to own, how little I felt in my heart of that resignation of which my lips were so lavish.'

I hung with inexpressible delight on every word Dr. Barlow uttered, and expressed my fears that such a prize was too much above my deserts, to allow me to encourage very sanguine hopes. 'You have my cordial wishes for your success,' said he, 'though I shall lament the day when you snatch so fair a flower from our fields, to transplant it into your northern gardens.'

We had now reached the Park-gate, where Sir John and Lady Belfield joined us. As it was very hot, Dr. Barlow proposed to conduct us a nearer way. He carried us through a small nursery of fruit trees, which I had not before observed, though it was adjoining the ladies' flower garden, from which it was separated and concealed by a row of small trees. I expressed my surprise that the delicate Lucilla would allow so coarse an enclosure to be so near her ornamented ground. 'You see she does all she can to shut it out,' replied he. 'I will tell you how it happens, for I cannot vindicate the taste of my fair friend, without exposing a better quality in her. But if I betray her you must not betray me.

'It is a rule when any servant who has lived seven years at the Grove marries, provided they have conducted themselves well, and made a prudent choice, for Mr. Stanley to give them a piece of ground on the waste to build a cottage; he also allows them to take stones from his quarry, and lime from his kiln; to this he adds a bit of ground for a garden. Mrs. Stanley presents some kitchen furniture, and gives a wedding dinner; and the Rector refuses his fee for performing the ceremony.'

'Caroline,' said Sir John, 'this is not the first time since we have been at the Grove, that I have been struck with observing how many benefits naturally result to the poor, from the rich living on their own estates. Their dependants have a thousand petty local advantages, which cost almost nothing to the giver, which are yet valuable to the receiver, and of which the absent never think.'

'You have heard,' said Dr. Barlow, 'that Miss Stanley, from her childhood, has been passionately fond of cultivating a garden. When she was hardly fourteen, she began to reflect that the delight she took in this employment was attended neither with pleasure nor profit to any one but herself, and she became jealous of a gratification which was so entirely selfish. She begged this piece of waste ground of her father, and stocked it with a number of fine young fruit trees of the common sort, apples, pears, plums, and the smaller fruits. When there is a wedding among the older servants, or when any good girl out of her school marries, she presents their little empty garden with a dozen young apple trees, and a few trees of the other sorts, never forgetting to embellish their little court with roses and honey-suckles. These last she transplants from the shrubbery, not to fill up the *village garden*, as it is called, with any thing that is of no positive use. She employs a poor lame man in the village a day in the week to look after this nursery, and by cuttings and grafts a good stock is raised on a small space. It is done at her own expense, Mr. Stanley making this a condition when he gave her the ground; 'otherwise,' said he, 'trifling as it is, it would be my charity and not her's, and she would get thanked for a kindness which would cost her nothing.' The warm-hearted little Phœbe co-operates in this, and all her sister's labours of love.'

'Some such union of charity with every personal indulgence, she generally imposes on herself and from this association she has acquired another virtue, for she tells me smiling, she is sometimes obliged to content herself with practising frugality instead of charity. When she finds she cannot afford both her own gratification, and the charitable act which she wanted to associate with it, and is therefore compelled to give up the charity, she compels herself to give up the indulgence also. By this self-denial she gets a little money in hand, for the next demand, and thus is enabled to afford both next time.'

As he finished speaking, we spied the lame gardener pruning and clearing the trees. 'Well, James,' said the Doctor, 'how does your nursery thrive?' 'Why, Sir,' said the poor man, 'we are rather thin of stout trees at present. You know we had three weddings at Christmas, which took thirty-six of my best apple trees at a blow, besides half a dozen tall pear trees, and as many plums. But we shall soon fetch it up, for Miss Lucilla makes me plant two for every one that is removed, so that we are always provided for a wedding, come when it will.'

I now recollected that I had been pleased with observing so many young orchards and flourishing cottage gardens in the village; little did I suspect the fair hand which could thus in a very few years diffuse an air of smiling comfort around these humble habitations, and embellish poverty itself. She makes, they told me, her periodical visits of inspection to see that neatness and order do not degenerate.

Not to appear too eager, I asked the poor man some questions about his health, which seemed infirm. 'I am but weak, Sir,' said he, 'for the matter of that, but I should have been dead long ago but for the 'Squire's family. He gives me the run of his kitchen, and Miss Lucilla allows me half a crown a week, for one day's work and any odd hour I can spare; but she don't let me earn it, for she is always watching for fear it should be too hot or too cold, or too wet for me: and she brings me my dose of bark herself into this tool-house, that she may be sure I take it; for she says servants and poor people like to have medicines provided for them, but don't care to take them. Then she watches that I don't throw my coat on the wet grass, which, she says, gives labouring men so much rheumatism; and she made me this nice flannel waistcoat, Sir, with her own hands. At Christmas they gave me a new suit from top to toe, so that I want nothing but a more thankful heart, for I never can be grateful enough to God and my benefactors.'

I asked some further questions, only to have the pleasure of hearing him talk longer about Lucilla. 'But, Sir,' said he, interrupting me, 'I hear bad news, very bad news. Pray your honour forgive me.' 'What do you mean, James?' said I, seeing his eye fill. 'Why, Sir, all the servants at the Grove will have it that you are come to carry off Miss Lucilla. God bless her whenever she goes. Your Mr. Edwards, Sir, says you are one of the best of gentlemen, but indeed, indeed, I don't know who can deserve her. She will carry a blessing wherever she goes.' The honest fellow put up the sleeve of his coat to brush away his tears, nor was I ashamed of those with which his honest affection filled my own eyes. While we were talking, a poor little girl, who I knew by her neat uniform belonged to Miss Stanley's school, passed us with a little basket in her hand. James called to her, and said, 'make haste, Rachel, you are after your time.'

'What, this is market day, James, is it,' said Dr. Barlow, 'and Rachel is come for her nosegays?' 'Yes, Sir,' said James; 'I forgot to tell their honours, that every Saturday, as soon as the school is over, the younger Misses give Rachel leave to come and fetch some flowers out of her garden, which she carries to the town to sell; she commonly gets a shilling, half of which they make her lay out to bring home a little tea for her poor sick mother, and the other half she lays up to buy shoes and stockings for herself and her crippled sister. Every little is a help where there is nothing, Sir.'

Sir John said nothing, but looked at Lady Belfield, whose eyes glistened while she softly said, 'O how little do the rich ever think what the aggregate even of their own squandered shillings would do in the way of charity, were they systematically applied to it.'

James now unlocked a little private door, which opened into the pleasure ground. There, at a distance, sitting in a circle on the new-mown grass, under a tree, we beheld all the little Stanleys, with a basket of flowers between them, out of which they were earnestly employed in sorting and tying up nosegays. We stood some time admiring their little busy faces and active finger's without their perceiving us, and got up to them just as they were putting their prettily formed bouquets into Rachel's basket, with which she marched off, with many charges from the children to waste no time by the way, and to be sure and leave the nosegay that had the myrtle in it at Mrs. Williams's.

'How many nosegays have you given to Rachel to-day, Louisa?' said Dr. Barlow to the eldest of the four. 'Only three a-piece, Sir,' replied she. 'We think it a bad day when we can't make up our dozen. They are all our own; we seldom touch mamma's flowers, and we never suffer James to take ours, because Phœbe said it might be tempting him.' Little Jane lamented that Lucilla had given them nothing to-day, except two or three sprigs of her best flowering myrtle, which, added she, 'we make Rachel give into the bargain to a poor sick lady, who loves flowers, and used to have good ones of her own, but who has now no money to spare, and could not afford to give more than the common price for a nosegay for her sick room! So we always slip a nice flower or two out of the green-house into her little bunch, and say nothing. When we walk that way we often leave her some flowers ourselves, and would do it oftener, if it did not hurt poor Rachel's trade.'

As we walked away from the sweet prattlers, Dr. Barlow said, 'These little creatures already emulate their sisters in associating some pretty kindness with their own pleasures. The act is trifling, but the habit is good; as is every habit which helps to take us out of self; which teaches

us to transfer our attention from our own gratification, to the wants and pleasures of another.'

'I confess,' said Lady Belfield, as we entered the house, 'that it never occurred to me that it was any part of charity to train my children to the habit of sacrificing their time or their pleasure for the benefit of others, though, to do them justice, they are very feeling and very liberal with their money.'

'My dear Caroline,' said Sir John, 'it is our money, not their's. It is, I fear, a cheap liberality, and abridges not themselves of one enjoyment. They well know we are so pleased to see them charitable, we shall instantly repay them with interest, whatever they give away, so that we have hitherto afforded them no opportunity to show their actual dispositions. Nay I begin to fear they may become charitable through covetousness, if they find out that the more they give the more they shall get. We must correct this artificial liberality as soon as we go home.'

CHAP. XXXI.

A few days after, Sir John Belfield and I agreed to take a ride to Mr. Carlton's, where we breakfasted. Nothing could be more rational than the whole turn of his mind, nor more agreeable and unreserved than his conversation. His behaviour to his amiable wife was affectionately attentive, and Sir John, who is a most critical observer, remarked that it was quite natural and unaffected. It appeared to be the result of esteem inspired by her merit, and quickened by a sense of his former unworthiness, which made him feel as if he could never do enough to efface the memory of past unkindness. He manifested evident symptoms of a mind earnestly intent on the discovery and pursuit of moral and religious truth; and from the natural ardour of his character, and the sincerity of his remorse, his attainments seemed likely to be rapid and considerable.

The sweet benignity of Mrs. Carlton's countenance was lighted up at our entrance with a smile of satisfaction. We had been informed with what pleasure she observed every accession of right-minded acquaintance which her husband made. Though her natural modesty prevented her from introducing any subject herself, yet when any thing useful was brought forward by others, she promoted it by a look compounded of pleasure and intelligence.

After a variety of topics had been despatched, the conversation fell on the prejudices which were commonly entertained by men of the world against religion. 'For my own part,' said Mr. Carlton, 'I must confess that no man had ever more and stronger prejudices to combat than myself. I mean not my own exculpation, when I add, that the imprudence, the want of judgment, and above all the incongruous mixtures and inconsistencies in many characters who are reckoned religious, and are ill calculated to do away the unfavourable opinions of men of an opposite way of thinking. As I presume that you, gentlemen, are not ignorant of the errors of my early life—error indeed is an appellation far too mild—I shall not scruple to own to you the source of those prejudices which retarded my progress, even after I became ashamed of my deviations from virtue. I had felt the turpitude of my habits long before I had courage to renounce them; and I renounced them long before I had courage to avow my abhorrence of them.'

Sir John and I expressed ourselves extremely obliged by the candour of his declaration, and assured him that his further declarations would not only gratify but benefit us.

'Educated as I had been,' said Mr. Carlton, 'in almost entire ignorance of religion, mine was rather an habitual indifference than a systematic unbelief. My thoughtless course of life, though it led me to hope that Christianity might not be true, yet had by no means been able to convince me that it was false. As I had not been taught to search for truth at the fountain, for I was unacquainted with the Bible, I had no readier means for forming my judgment, than by observing, though with a careless and casual eye, what effect religion produced in those who professed to be influenced by it.—My observations augmented my prejudices. What I saw of the professors increased my dislike of the profession. All the charges brought by their enemies, for I had been accustomed to weigh the validity of testimony, had not rivetted my dislike so much, as the difference between their own avowed principles and their obvious practice. Religious men should be the more cautious of giving occasion for reproach, as they know the world is always on the watch, and is more glad to have its prejudices confirmed than removed.

'I seized the moment of Mrs. Carlton's absence (who was just then called out of the room, but returned almost immediately) to observe, that what rooted my disgust, was, the eagerness with which the mother of my inestimable wife, who made a great parade of religion, pressed the marriage of her only child with a man whose conduct she knew to be irregular, and of whose principles she entertained a just, that is, an unfavourable opinion. To see, I repeat, the religious mother of Mrs. Carlton obviously governed in her zeal for promoting our union by motives as worldly as those of my poor father, who pretended to no religion at all, would have extremely lowered any respect which I might have previously been induced to entertain for characters of that description. Nor was this disgust diminished by my acquaintance with Mr. Tyrrel. I had known him while a professed man of the world, and had at that time, I fear, disliked his violent temper, his narrow mind, and his coarse manners, more than his vices.

'I had heard of the power of religion to change the heart, and I ridiculed the wild chimera. My contempt for this notion was confirmed by the conduct of Mr. Tyrrel in his new character. I found it had produced little change in him, except furnishing him with a new subject of discussion. I saw that he had only laid down one set of opinions, and taken up another, with no addition whatever to his virtues, and with the addition to his vices of spiritual pride

and self-confidence; for with hypocrisy I have no right to charge any man. I observed that Tyrrel and one or two of his new friends, rather courted attack than avoided it. They considered discretion as the infirmity of a worldly mind, and every attempt at kindness or conciliation as an abandonment of faith. They eagerly ascribed to their piety, the dislike which was often excited by their peculiarities. I found them apt to dignify the disapprobation which their singularity occasioned with the name of persecution. I have seen them take comfort in the belief that it was their religion which was disliked, when perhaps it was chiefly their oddities.

'At Tyrrel's I became acquainted with your friends Mr. and Mrs. Ranby. I leave you to judge whether their characters, that of the lady especially, were calculated to do away my prejudices. I had learned from my favourite Roman poet a precept in composition, of never making a God appear, except on occasions worthy of a God, I have since had reason to think this rule as justly theological as it is classical. So thought not the Ranbys.

'It will indeed readily be allowed by every reflecting mind, as God is to be viewed in all his works, so his 'never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and on earth.' But surely there is something very offensive in the indecent familiarity with which the name of God and Providence is brought in on every trivial occasion, as was the constant practice of Mr. and Mrs. Ranby. I was not even then so illogical a reasoner as to allow a general and deny a particular providence. If the one were true, I inferred that the other could not be false. But I felt that the religion of these people was of a slight texture and a bad taste. I was disgusted with littleness in some instances, and with inconsistency in others. Still their absurdity gave me right to suspect their sincerity.

'Whenever Mrs. Ranby had a petty inclination to gratify, she had always recourse to what she called the *leadings of Providence*. In matters of no more moment than whether she should drink tea with one neighbour instead of another, she was *impelled*, or *directed*, or *overruled*. I observed that she always took care to interpret these *leadings* to her own state, and under their sanction she always did what her fancy led her to do. She professed to follow this guidance on such minute occasions, that I had almost said, her piety seemed a little impious. To the actual dispensations of Providence, especially when they came in a trying or adverse shape, I did not observe more submission than I had seen in persons who could not be suspected of religion. I must own to you also, that as I am rather fastidious, I began to fancy that vulgar language, quaint phrases, and false grammer, were necessarily connected with religion. The sacrifice of taste and elegance seemed indispensable, and I was inclined to fear that if *they* were right, it would be impossible to get to heaven with good English.'

'Though I grant there is some truth in your remarks, Sir,' said I, 'you must allow that when men are determined at all events to hunt down religious characters, they are never at a loss to find plausible objections to justify their dislike; and while they conceal, even from themselves, the real motive of their aversion, the vigilance with which they pry into the characters of men who are reckoned pious, is exercised with the secret hope of finding faults enough to confirm their prejudices.'

'As a general truth, you are perfectly right,' said Mr. Carlton; 'but at the period to which I allude, I had now got to that stage of my progress, as to be rather searching for instances to invite than to repel me in my inquiry.'

'You will grant, however,' said I, 'that it is a common effect of prejudice to transfer the faults of a religious man to religion itself. Such a man happens to have an uncouth manner, an awkward gesture, an unmodulated voice; his allusions may be coarse, his phraseology quaint, his language slovenly. The solid virtues which may lie disguised under these incumbrances go for nothing. The man is absurd, and therefore Christianity is ridiculous. Its truth, however, though it may be eclipsed, cannot be extinguished. Like its divine Author, it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

'There was another repulsive circumstance,' replied Mr. Carlton, 'the scanty charities both of Tyrrel and his new friends, so inferior to the liberality of my father and of Mr. Flam, who never professed to be governed by any higher motive than mere feeling, strengthened my dislike. The calculations of mere reason taught me that the religious man who does not greatly exceed the man of the world in his liberalities, falls short of him; because the worldly man who gives liberally, acts above his principle, while the Christian who does no more, falls short of his. And though I by no means insist that liberality is a certain indication of piety, yet I will venture to assert that the want of the one is no doubtful symptom of the absence of the other.'

'I next resolved to watch carefully the conduct of another description of Christians, who come under the class of the formal and the decent. They were considered as more creditable, but I did not perceive them to be more exemplary. They were more absorbed in the world, and more governed by its opinion. I found them clamorous in defence of the church in words, but neither adorning it by their lives, nor embracing its doctrines in their hearts. Rigid in the observance of some of its external rites, but little influenced by its liberal principles and charitable spirit. They venerated the establishment merely as a political institution; but of her outward forms they conceived as comprehending the whole of her excellence. Of her spiritual beauty and superiority they seemed to have no conception. I observed in them less warmth of affection for those with whom they agreed in external profession, than of rancour for those who differed from them, though but a single shade, and in points of no importance. They were cordial haters, and frigid lovers. Had they lived in the early ages, when the church was split into parties by paltry disputes, they would have thought the controversy about the time of keeping Easter, of more consequence than the event itself, which that festival celebrates.'

'My dear Sir,' said I, as soon as he had done speaking, 'you have accounted very naturally for your prejudices. Your chief error seems to have consisted in the selection of the persons you adopted as standards. They all differed as much from the right as they differed from each other; and the truth is, their vehement desire to differ from each other was a chief cause why they departed so much from the right. But your instances were so unhappily chosen, that they proved nothing against Christianity. The two opposite descriptions of persons who deterred you from religion, and who passed muster in their respective corps, under the generic term of religious, would, I believe, be scarcely acknowledged as such by the soberly and soundly pious.'

'My own subsequent experience,' resumed Mr. Carlton, 'has confirmed the justness of your remark. When I began, through the gradual change wrought in my views and actions by the silent but powerful preaching of Mrs. Carlton's example, to have less interest in believing that Christianity was false, I then applied myself to search for reasons, to believe that it was true. But plain, abstract reasoning, though it might catch hold on beings who are all pure intellect, and though it might have given a right bias even to *my* opinions, would probably never have determined my conduct, unless I saw it clothed, as it were, with a body. I wanted examples which should influence me to act, as well as proofs which should incline me to believe; something which would teach me what to do, as well as what to think. I wanted exemplifications as well as precepts. I doubted of all merely speculative truth. I wanted, from beholding the effect, to refer back to the principle. I wanted arguments more palpable and less theoretic. Surely, said I to myself, if religion be a real principle it must be an operative one, and I would rationally infer that Christianity were true, if the tone of Christian practice were high.

'I Began to look clandestinely into Henrietta's Bible. There indeed I found that the spirit of religion was invested with just such a body as I had wished to see; that it exhibited actions as well as sentiments, characters as well as doctrines; the life pourtrayed evidently governed by the principle inculcated; the conduct and the doctrine in just correspondence. But if the Bible be true, thought I, may we not reasonably expect, that the principles which once produced the exalted practice which that Bible records will produce similar effects now?

'I put, rashly perhaps, the truth of Christianity on this issue, and sought society of a higher stamp. Fortunately, the increasing external decorum of my conduct, began to make my reception less difficult among good men than it had been. Hitherto, and that for the sake of my wife, my visits had rather been endured than encouraged; nor was I myself forward to seek the society which shunned me. Even of those superior characters, with whom I did occasionally associate, I had not come near enough to form an exact estimate.'

'DISINTERESTEDNESS AND CONSISTENCY had become with me a sort of touch-stone, by which to try the characters I was investigating. My experiment was favourable. I had for some time examined my wife's conduct, with a mixture of admiration as to the act, and incredulity as to the motive. I had seen her foregoing her own indulgences, that she might augment those of a husband whom she had so little reason to love. Here were the two qualities I required, with a renunciation of self without parade or profession. Still this was a solitary instance. When, on a nearer survey, I beheld Dr. Barlow exhibiting, by his exemplary conduct during the week, the best commentary on his Sunday's sermon: when I saw him refuse a living of nearly twice the value of that he possessed, because the change would diminish his usefulness, I was *staggered*.

'When I saw Mr. and Mrs. Stanley spending their time and fortune as entirely in acts of beneficence, as if they had built their hope on charity alone, and yet utterly renouncing any such confidence, and trusting entirely to another foundation;—when I saw Lucilla, a girl of eighteen, refusing a young nobleman of a clear estate, and neither disagreeable in his person or manner, on the single avowed ground of his loose principles; when the noble rejection of the daughter was supported by the parents, whose principles no arguments drawn from rank or fortune could subvert or shake—I was *convinced*.

'These, and some other instances of the same nature, were exactly the test I had been seeking. Here was *disinterestedness* upon full proof. Here was *consistency* between practice and profession. By such examples, and by cordially adopting those principles which produced them, together with a daily increasing sense of my past enormities, I hope to become in time less unworthy of the wife to whom I owe my peace on earth, and my hope in heaven.'

The tears which had been collecting in Mrs. Carlton's eyes for some time, now silently stole down her cheeks. Sir John and myself were deeply affected with the frank and honest narrative to which we had been listening. It raised in us an esteem and affection for the narrator which has since been continually augmenting. I do not think the worse of his state, for the difficulties which impeded it, nor that his advancement will be less sure, because it has been gradual. His fear of delusion has been a salutary guard. The apparent slowness of his progress has arisen from his dread of self-deception, and the diligence of his search is an indication of his sincerity.

'But did you not find,' said I, 'that the piety of these more correct Christians drew upon them nearly as much censure and suspicion as the indiscretion of the enthusiasts? And that the formal class who were nearly as far removed from effective piety as from wild fanaticism, ran away with all the credit of religion?'

'With those,' replied Mr. Carlton, 'who are on the watch to discredit Christianity, no consistency can stand their determined opposition; but the fair and candid inquirer will not reject the truth, when it forces itself on the mind with a clear and convincing evidence.'

Though I had been joining in the general subject, yet my thoughts had wandered from it

to Lucilla, ever since her noble rejection of Lord Staunton had been named by Mr. Carlton as one of the causes which had strengthened his unsteady faith. And while he and Sir John were talking over their youthful connections, I resumed with Mrs. Carlton, who sat next me, the interesting topic.

'Lord Staunton,' said she, 'is a relation, and not a very distant one, of ours. He used to take more delight in Mr. Carlton's society when it was less improving, than he does now, that it is become really valuable; yet he often visits us. Miss Stanley now and then indulges me with her company for a day or two. In the visits Lord Staunton happened to meet her two or three times. He was enchanted with her person and manners, and exerted every art and faculty of pleasing, which, it must be owned, he possesses. Though we should both have rejoiced in an alliance with the excellent family at the Grove, through this sweet girl, I thought it my duty not to conceal from her the irregularity of my cousin's conduct in one particular instance, as well as the general looseness of his religious principles. The caution was the more necessary, as he had so much prudence and good breeding as to behave with general propriety when under our roof; and he allowed me to speak to him more freely than any other person. When I talked seriously, he sometimes laughed, always opposed, but was never angry.

'One day he arrived quite unexpectedly when Miss Stanley was with me. He found us in my dressing-room reading together a *Dissertation on the power of religion to change the heart.* Dreading some levity, I strove to hide the book. but he took it out of my hand, and glancing his eye on the title, he said, laughing, 'This is a foolish subject enough; a *good heart* does not want changing, and with a *bad* one none of *us three* having any thing to do." Lucilla spoke not a syllable. All the light things he uttered, and which he meant for wit, so far from raising a smile, increased her gravity. She listened, but with some uneasiness, to a desultory conversation between us, in which I attempted to assert the power of the Almighty to rectify the mind, and alter the character. Lord Staunton treated my assertion as a wild chimera, and said, 'He was sure I had more understanding than to adopt such a methodistical notion; professing at the same time a vague admiration of virtue and goodness, which he said, bowing to Miss Stanley, were *natural* where they existed at all; that a good heart did not want mending, and a bad one could not be mended, with other similar expressions, all implying contempt of my position, and exclusive compliment to her.

'After dinner, Lucilla stole away from a conversation which was not very interesting to her, and carried her book to the summer-house, knowing that Lord Staunton liked to sit long at table. But his lordship, missing her for whom the visit was meant, soon broke up the party, and hearing which way she took, pursued her to the summer-house. After a profusion of compliments, expressive of his high admiration, he declared his passion in very strong and explicit terms, and requested her permission to make proposals to her father, to which he conceived she could have no possible objection.

'She thanked him with great politeness for his favourable opinion, but frankly told him, that though extremely sensible of the honour he intended her, thanks were all she had to offer in turn; she earnestly desired the business might go no further, and that he would spare himself the trouble of an application to her father, who always kindly allowed her to decide for herself, in a concern of so much importance.

'Disappointed, shocked, and irritated at a rejection so wholly unexpected, he insisted on knowing the cause. Was it his person? was it his fortune? was it his understanding to which she objected? She honestly assured him it was neither. His rank and fortune were above her expectations. To his natural advantages there could be no reasonable objection. He still vehemently insisted on her assigning the true cause. She was then driven to the necessity of confessing that she feared his principles were not those of a man with whom she could venture to trust her own.

'He bore this reproof with more patience than she had expected. As she had made no exception to his person and understanding, both of which he rated very highly, he could bear with the charge brought against his principles, on which he did not set so great a value. She had indeed wounded his pride, but not in the part where it was most vulnerable. 'If that be all,' said he gaily, 'the objection is at an end; your charming society will reform me, your influence will raise my principles, and your example will change my character.'

'What, my Lord,' said she, her courage increasing with her indignation, 'this from *you*? From you, who declared only this morning, that the work of changing the heart was too great for the Almighty himself? You do not now scruple to declare that it is in *my* power. That work which is too hard for Omnipotence, your flattery would make me believe a weak girl can accomplish. No my lord, I will never add to the number of those rash women who have risked their eternal happiness on this vain hope. It would be too late to repent of my folly, after my presumption had incurred its just punishment.'

'So saying, she left the summer-house with a polite dignity, which, as she afterwards told me, increased his passion, while it inflamed his pride almost to madness. Finding she refused to appear, he quitted the house, but not his design. His applications have since been repeated, but though he has met with the firmest repulses, both from the parents and the daughter, he cannot be prevailed upon to relinquish his hope. It is so far a misfortune to us, as Lucilla now never comes near us, except he is known not to be in the country. Had the objection been to his person, or fortune, he says, as it would have been substantial, it might have been insuperable; but where the only ground of difference is mere matter of opinion, he is sure that time and perseverance will conquer such a chimerical objection.'

I returned to the Grove, not only cured of

every jealous feeling, but transported with such a decisive proof of the dignity and purity of Miss Stanley's mind.

CHAP. XXXII.

Miss Sparkes, a neighbouring lady, whom the reputation of being a wit and an Amazon, had kept single at the age of five and forty, though her person was not disagreeable, and her fortune was considerable, called in one morning while we were at breakfast. She is remarkable for her pretension to odd and opposite qualities. She is something of a scholar, and a huntress, a politician, and a farrier. She out-rides Mr. Flam, and out-argues Mr. Tyrrel; excels in driving four in hand, and in canvassing at an election. She is always anxious about the party, but never about the candidate, in whom she requires no other merit, but his being in the opposition, which she accepts as a pledge for all other merit. In her adoption of any talent, or her exercise of any quality, it is always sufficient recommendation to her that it is not feminine.

From the window we saw her descend from her lofty phæton, and when she came in,

> The cap, the whip, the masculine attire,

the loud voice, the intrepid look, the independent air, the whole deportment indicated a disposition rather to confer protection than to accept it.

She made an apology for her intrusion, by saying that her visit was rather to the stable than the breakfast room. One of her horses was a little lame, and she wanted to consult Mr. Stanley's groom, who it seems was her oracle in that science, in which she herself is a professed adept.

During her short visit, she laboured so sedulously, not to diminish by her conversation the character she was so desirous to establish, that her efforts defeated the end they aimed to secure. She was witty with all her mirth, and her sarcastic turn, for wit it was not, made little amends for her want of simplicity. I perceived that she was fond of the bold, the marvellous, and the incredible. She ventured to tell a story of two, so little within the verge of ordinary probability, that she risked her credit for veracity, without perhaps really violating truth. The credit acquired by such relations seldom pays the relater for the hazard run by the communication.

As we fell into conversation, I observed the peculiarities of her character. She never sees any difficulties in any question. Whatever topic is started, while the rest of the company are hesitating as to the propriety of their determination, she alone is never at a loss. Her answer always follows the proposition, without a moment's interval for examination herself, or, for allowing any other person a chance of delivering an opinion.

Mr. Stanley, who always sets an example of strict punctuality to his family, had to-day come in to perform his family devotions somewhat latter than usual. I could perceive that he had been a little moved. His countenance wanted something of its placid serenity, though it seemed to be a seriousness untinctured with anger. He confessed, while we were at breakfast, that he had been spending above an hour, in bringing one of his younger children to a sense of a fault she had committed. 'She has not,' said he, 'told an absolute falsehood, but in what she said there was a prevarication, there was pride, there was passion. Her perverseness, has at length given way. Tears of resentment are changed into tears of contrition. But she is not to appear in the drawing-room to-day. She is to be deprived of the honour of carrying food to the poor in the evening. Nor is she to furnish her contingent of nosegay to Rachel's basket. This is a mode of punishment we prefer to that of curtailing any personal indulgences: the importance we should assign to the privation would be setting too much value on the enjoyment.'

'You should be careful Mr. Stanley, said Miss Sparkes, 'not to break the child's spirits. Too tight a rein will check her generous ardour, and curb her genius. I would not subdue the independence of her mind, and make a tame, dull animal, of a creature whose very faults give indications of a soaring nature.' Even Lady Belfield, to whose soft and tender heart the very sound of punishment, or even privation, carried a sort of terror, asked Mr. Stanley, 'if he did not think that he had taken up a trifling offence too seriously, and punished it too severely.'

'The thing is a trifle in itself,' replied he, 'but infant prevarication unnoticed, and unchecked, is the prolific seed of subterfuge, of expediency, of deceit, of falsehood, of hypocrisy.'

'But the dear little creature,' said Lady Belfield, 'is not addicted to equivocation.—I have always admired her correctness in her pleasant pratle.'

'It is for the very reason,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'that I am so careful to check the first indication of the contrary tendency.—As the fault is a solitary one, I trust the punishment will be so too. For which reason I have marked it in a way to which her memory will easily recur. Mr. Brandon, an amiable friend of mine, but of an indolent temper, through a negligence in watching over an early propensity to deceit, suffered his only son to run on from one stage of falsehood to another, till he settled down in a most consummate hypocrite. His plausible manners enabled him to keep his more turbulent vices out of sight. Impatient when a youth of that contradiction to which he had never been accustomed when a boy, he became notoriously profligate. His dissimulation was at length too thin to conceal from his mistaken father his more palpable vices. His artifices finally involved him in a duel, and his premature death broke the heart of my poor friend.

'This sad example led me in my own family to watch the evil in the bud. Divines often say, that unbelief lies at the root of all sin. This seems strikingly true in our conniving at the faults of our children. If we really believed the denunciation of Scripture, could we for the sake of a momentary gratification, not so much

to our child as to ourselves, (which is the case in all blameable indulgence,) overlook that fault which may be the germ of unspeakable miseries! In my view of things, deceit is no slight offence. I feel myself answerable in no small degree for the eternal happiness of these beloved creatures whom Providence has especially committed to my trust.'

'But it is such a severe trial,' said Lady Belfield, 'to a fond parent to inflict voluntary pain!'

'Shall we feel for their pain and not for their danger?' replied Mr. Stanley. 'I wonder how parents, who love their children as I love mine, can put in competition a temporary indulgence, which may foster one evil temper, or fasten one bad habit, with the eternal welfare of that child's soul. A soul of such inconceivable worth, whether we consider its nature, its duration, or the price which was paid for its redemption! What parent, I say, can by his own rash negligence, or false indulgence, risk the happiness of such a soul, not for a few days or years, but for a period compared with which the whole duration of time is but a point?—A soul of such infinite faculties, which has a capacity for improving in holiness and happiness, through all the countless ages of eternity?'

Observing Sir John listen with some emotion, Mr. Stanley went on; 'what remorse, my dear friend, can equal the pangs of him who has reason to believe that his child has not only lost this eternity of glory, but incurred an eternity of misery, through the carelessness of that parent, who assigned his very fondness as a reason for his neglect?—Think of the state of such a father, when he figures to himself the thousands and ten thousands of glorified spirits that stand before the throne, and his darling excluded!—excluded perhaps by his own ill-judging fondness. Oh, my friends, disguise it as we may, and deceive ourselves as we will, want of faith is as much at the bottom of this sin as of all others. Notwithstanding an indefinite, indistinct notion which men call faith, they do actually *believe* in this eternity; they believe it in a general way, but they do not believe in it practically, personally, influentially.'

While Mr. Stanley was speaking with an energy which evinced how much his own heart was affected, Miss Sparkes, by the impatience of her looks, evidently manifested that she wished to interrupt him. Good breeding, however, kept her silent till he had done speaking: she then said, 'that though she allowed that absolute falsehood, and falsehood used for mischievous purposes was criminal, yet there was a danger on the other hand of laying too severe restrictions on freedom of speech. That there might be such a thing as tacit hypocrisy. That people might be guilty of as much deceit by suppressing their sentiments if just, as by expressing such as were not quite correct.—That a repulsive treatment was calculated to extinguish the fire of invention. She thought also that there were occasions where a harmless falsehood might not only be pardonable, but laudable. But then she allowed, that a falsehood to be allowed must be inoffensive.'

Mr. Stanley said, 'that an inoffensive falsehood was a perfect anomaly. But allowing it possible, that an individual instance of deceit might be passed over, which however he never could allow, yet one successful falsehood, on the plea of doing good, would necessarily make way for another, till the limits which divide right and wrong would be completely broken down, and every distinction between truth and falsehood be utterly confounded.—If such latitude were allowed, even to obtain some good purpose, it would gradually debauch all human intercourse. The smallest deviation would naturally induce a pernicious habit, endanger the security of society, and violate an express law of God.'

'There is no tendency,' said Sir John Belfield, 'more to be guarded against among young persons of warm hearts and lively imaginations. The feeling will think falsehood good if it is meant to *do* good, and the fanciful will think it justifiable if it is ingenious.'

Phœbe, in presenting her father with a dish of coffee, said in a half whisper, 'surely, papa, there can be no harm in speaking falsely on a subject where I am ignorant of the truth.'

'There are occasions, my dear Phœbe,' replied her father, 'in which ignorance itself is a fault. Inconsiderateness is always one. It is your duty to deliberate before you speak. It is your duty not to deceive by your negligence in getting at the truth; or by publishing false information as truth, though you have reason to suspect it may be false. You well know who it is that associates him that *loveth* a lie with him that *maketh* it.'

'But, Sir,' said Miss Sparkes, 'if by a falsehood I could preserve a life, or save my country, falsehood would then be meritorious, and I should glory in deceiving.'

'Persons, Madam,' said Mr. Stanley, 'who, in debate, have a favourite point to carry, are apt to suppose extreme cases, which *can* and *do* very rarely if ever occur. This they do in order to compel the acquiescence of an opponent to what ought never to be allowed. It is a proud and fruitless speculation. The infinite power of God can never stand in need of the aid of a weak mortal to help him out of his difficulties.—If he sees fit to preserve the life, or save the country, he is not driven to such shifts. Omnipotence can extricate himself, and accomplish his own purposes without endangering an immortal soul.'

Miss Sparkes took her leave soon after, in order, as she said, to go to the stable and take the groom's opinion. Mr. Stanley insisted that her carriage should be brought round to the door, to which we all attended her. He inquired which was the lame horse. Instead of answering, she went directly up to the animal, and after patting him with some technical jockey phrases, she fearlessly took up his hind leg, carefully examined his foot, and while she continued standing in what appeared to the ladies a perilous, and to me a disgusting situation, she run over all the terms of the veterinary art with the groom, and when Miss Stanley expressed some fear of her danger, and some dislike of her coarseness, she burst into a loud laugh, and slapping her on the shoulder, asked her if it was not better to understand the properties and diseases of so noble an animal, than to waste her time in studying confectionary with old Goody

Comfit, or in teaching the catechism to little ragged beggar-brats?

As soon as she was gone, the lively Phœbe, who, her father says, has narrowly escaped being a wit herself, cried out, 'Well, papa, I must say that I think Miss Sparkes with all her faults is rather an agreeable woman.' 'I grant that she is amusing,' returned he, 'but I do not allow her to be quite agreeable. Between these, Phœbe, there is a wide distinction. To a correct mind, no one can be agreeable who is incorrect. Propriety is so indispensable to agreeableness, that when a lady allows herself to make any, even the smallest, sacrifice of veracity, religion, modesty, candour, or the decorums of her sex, she may be shining, she may be showy, she may be amusing, but she cannot, properly speaking, be agreeable.—Miss Sparkes, I very reluctantly confess, does sometimes make these sacrifices, in a degree to alarm her own principles. She would not tell a direct falsehood for the world: she does not indeed invent, but she embellishes, enlarges, she exaggerates, she discolours. In her moral grammar there is no positive or comparative degree. Pink with her is scarlet. The noise of a pop-gun is a cannon. A shower is a tempest. A person of small fortune is a beggar. —One in easy circumstances is a Crœsus.—A girl, if not perfectly well made, is deformity personified; if tolerable, a Grecian Venus. Her favourites are Angels, her enemies Dæmons.

She would be thought very religious, and I hope that she will one day become so; yet she sometimes treats serious things with no small levity, and though she would not originally say a very bad word, yet she makes no scruple of repeating, with great glee, profane stories told by others. Besides she possesses the dangerous art of exciting an improper idea, without using an improper word. Gross indecency would shock her, but she often verges so far towards indelicacy, as to make Mrs. Stanley uneasy. Then she is too much of a genius to be tied down by any considerations of prudence. If a good thing occurs, out it comes, without regard to time or circumstance. She would tell the same story to a bishop, as to her chambermaid. If she says a right thing, which she often does, it is seldom in the right place. She makes her way in society without attaching many friends. Her bon mots are admired and repeated; yet I never met with a man of sense who, though he may join in flattering her, did not declare, as soon as she was out of the room, that he would not for the world that she should be his wife or daughter. It is irksome to her to converse with her own sex, while she little suspects that ours is not properly grateful for the preference with which she honours us.

'She is,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'charitable with the purse, but not with her tongue; she relieves her poor neighbours, and indemnifies herself by slandering her rich ones.—She has, however, many good qualities, is generous, feeling, and humane, and I would on no account speak so freely of a lady whom I receive at my house, were it not that, if I were quite silent, after Phœbe's expressed admiration, she might conclude that I saw nothing to condemn in Miss Sparkes, and might be copying her faults, under the notion that being entertaining made amends for every thing.'

CHAP. XXXIII.

One morning, Sir John coming in from his ride, gaily called out to me, as I was reading, 'Oh, Charles, such a piece of news! the Miss Flams are converted. They have put on tuckers—they were at church twice on Sunday—Blair's Sermons are sent for, and you are the reformer.' This ludicrous address reminded Mr. Stanley, that Mr. Flam had told him we were all in disgrace; for not having called on the ladies, and it was proposed to repair this neglect.

'Now take notice,' said Sir John, 'if you do not see a new character assumed. Thinking Charles to be a fine man of the town, the modish racket, which indeed is their natural state, was played off, but it did not answer. As they probably, by this time, suspect your character to be somewhat between the Strephon and the Hermit, we shall now, in return, see something between the wood nymph and the nun; I shall not wonder if the extravagantly modish Miss Bell

Is now Pastora by a fountain's side.

Though I would not attribute the change to the cause assigned by Sir John, yet I confess we found, when we made our visit, no small revolution in Miss Bell Flam. The part of the Arcadian Nymph, the reading lady, the lover of retirement, the sentimental admirer of domestic life, the censurer of thoughtless dissipation, was each acted in succession, but so skilfully touched, that the shades of each melted in the other, without any of those violent transitions which a less experienced actress would have exhibited. Sir John slily, yet with affected gravity, assisting her to sustain this newly adopted character, which, however, he was sure would last no longer than this visit.

When we returned home we met the Miss Stanleys in the garden, and joined them. 'Don't you admire,' said Sir John, 'the versatility of Miss Bell's genius? You, Charles, are not the first man on whom an assumed fondness for rural delights has been practised. A friend of mine was drawn in to marry, rather suddenly, a thorough-paced town-bred lady, by her repeated declarations of her passionate fondness for the country, and the rapture she expressed when rural scenery was the subject. All she knew of the country was, that she had now and then been on a party of pleasure at Richmond, in the fine summer months; a great dinner at the Star and Garter, gay company, a bright day, lovely scenery, a dance on the green, a partner to her taste, French horns on the water, altogether constituted a feeling of pleasure, from which she had really persuaded herself that she was fond of the country. But when all these concomitants were withdrawn, when she had lost the gay partner, the dance, the horns, the flattery and the frolic, and nothing was left but her books, her own dull mansion; her domestic employments, and the sober society of her husband,

the pastoral vision vanished. She discovered, or rather *he* discovered, but too late, that the country had not only no charms for her, but that it was a scene of constant *ennui* and vapid dullness. She languished for the pleasures she had quitted, and for the comforts she had lost. Opposite inclinations led to opposite pursuits; difference of taste, however, needed not to have led to total disunion, had there been on the part of the lady such a degree of attachment as might have induced a spirit of accommodation, or such a fund of principle as might have taught her the necessity of making those sacrifices which affection, had it existed, would have rendered pleasant, or duty would have made light, had she been early taught self-government.'

Miss Stanley, smiling said, 'she hoped Sir John had a little overcharged the picture.' He defended himself by declaring he drew from life, and that from his long observation he could present us with a whole gallery of such portraits. He left me to continue my walk with the two Miss Stanleys.

The more I conversed with Lucilla, the more I saw that good breeding in her was only the outward expression of humility, and not an art employed for the purpose of enabling her to do without it. We continued to converse on the subject of Miss Flam's fondness for the gay world. This introduced a natural expression of my admiration of Miss Stanley's choice of pleasures and pursuits, so different from those of most other women of her age.

With the most graceful modesty she said, 'nothing humbles me more than compliments; for when I compare what I hear with what I feel, I find the picture of myself, drawn by a flattering friend, so utterly unlike the original in my own heart, that I am more sunk by my own consciousness of the want of resemblance, than elated that another had not discovered it. It makes me feel like an impostor. If I contradict this favourable opinion, I am afraid of being accused of affectation; and if I silently swallow it, I am contributing to the deceit of passing for what I am not.' This ingenuous mode of disclaiming flattery only raised her in my esteem, and the more, as I told her such humble renunciation of praise could only proceed from that inward principle of genuine piety, and devout feeling, which made so amiable a part of her character.

'How little,' said she, 'is the human heart known except to him who made it. While a fellow creature may admire our apparent devotion, He who appears to be its object, witnesses the wandering of the heart, which seems to be lifted up to him. He sees it roving to the ends of the earth, busied about any thing rather than himself; running after trifles which not only dishonour a Christian, but would disgrace a child. As to my very virtues, if I dare apply such a word to myself, they sometimes lose their character by not keeping their proper place. They become sins by infringing on higher duties. If I mean to perform an act of devotion, some crude plan of charity forces itself on my mind, and what with trying to drive out one, and to establish the other, I rise dissatisfied and unimproved, and resting my sole hope not on the duty which I have been performing, but on the mercy which I have been offending.'

I assured her, with all the simplicity of truth, and all the sincerity of affection, that this confession only served to raise my opinion of the piety she disclaimed, that such deep consciousness of imperfection, so quick a discernment of the slightest deviation, and such constant vigilance to prevent it, were the truest indications of an humble spirit; and that those who thus carefully guarded themselves against small errors, were in little danger of being betrayed into great ones.

She replied, smiling, that 'she should not be so angry with vanity, if it would be contented to keep its proper place among the vices; but her quarrel with it was, that it would mix itself with our virtues, and rob us of their reward.'

'Vanity, indeed,' replied I, 'differs from the other vices in this: *they* commonly are only opposite to the one contrary virtue, while this vice is a kind of ubiquity, is on the watch to intrude every where, and weakens all the virtues which it cannot destroy. I believe vanity was the harpy of the ancient poets, which tell us tainted whatever it touched.'

'Self-deception is so easy,' replied Miss Stanley, 'that I am even afraid of highly extolling any good quality, lest I should sit down satisfied with having borne my testimony in its favour, and so rest contented with the praise instead of the practice. Commending a right thing is a cheap substitute for doing it, with which we are too apt to satisfy ourselves.'

'There is no mark,' I replied, 'which more clearly distinguishes that humility which has the love of God for its principle, from its counterfeit, a false and superficial politeness, than that, while this flatters, in order to extort in return more praise than is due, humility like the divine principle from which it springs, seeketh not even its own.'

In answer to some further remark of mine, with an air of infinite modesty, she said, 'I have been betrayed, Sir, into saying too much. It will, I trust however, have the good effect of preventing you from thinking better of me than I deserve. In general, I hold it indiscreet to speak of the state of one's mind. I have been taught this piece of prudence by my own indiscretion. I once lamented to a lady the fault of which we have been speaking, and observed how difficult it was to keep the heart right. She so little understood the nature of this inward corruption, that she told in confidence to two or three friends, that they were all much mistaken in Miss Stanley, for though her character stood so fair with the world, she had secretly confessed to her that she was a great sinner.'

I could not forbear repeating, though she had chid me for it before, how much I had been struck with several instances of her indifference to the world, and her superiority to its pleasures. 'Do you know,' continued she, smiling, 'that you are more my enemy than the lady of whom I have been speaking? She only defamed my principles, but you are corrupting them. The world, I believe, is not so much a place as a nature. It is possible to be religious in a court and worldly in a monastery. I find that the thought-

may be engaged too anxiously about so petty a concern as a little family arrangement; that the mind may be drawn off from better pursuits, and engrossed by things too trivial to name, as much as by objects more apparently wrong. The country is certainly favourable to religion, but it would be hard on the millions who are doomed to live in towns if it were exclusively favourable. Nor must we lay more stress on the accidental circumstance than it deserves. Nay I almost doubt if it is not too pleasant to be quite safe. An enjoyment which assumes a sober shape may deceive us, by making us believe we are practising a duty when we are only gratifying a taste.'

'But do you not think,' said I, 'that there may be merit in the taste itself? May not a succession of acts forming a habit, and that habit a good one, induce so sound a way of thinking, that it may become difficult to distinguish the duty from the taste, and to separate the principle from the choice? This I really believe to be the case in minds finely wrought and vigilantly watched.

I observed that however delightful the country might be a great part of the year, yet there were a few winter months when I feared it might be dull, though not in the degree Sir John Richmond's lady had found it.

With a smile of compassion at my want of taste, she said 'she perceived I was no gardener. To me,' added she, 'the winter has charms of its own, If I were not afraid of the light habit of introducing Providence on an occasion not sufficiently important, I would say that he seems to reward those who love the country well enough to live in it the whole year, by making the greater part of the winter the busy season for gardening operations. If I happen to be in town a few days only, every sun that shines, every shower that falls, every breeze that blows, seems wasted, because I do not see their effect upon my plants.' 'But surely,' said I, 'the winter at least suspends your enjoyment. There is little pleasure in contemplating vegetation in its torpid state, in surveying

The naked shoots, barren as lances,

as Cowper describes the winter shrubbery.'

'The pleasure is in the preparation,' replied she. 'When all appears dead and torpid to you idle spectators, all is secretly at work; nature is busy in preparing her treasures under ground, and art has a hand in the process. When the blossoms of summer are delighting you mere amateurs, then it is that we professional people,' added she, laughing, 'are really idle. The silent operations of the winter now produce themselves —the canvass of nature is covered—the great Artist has laid on his colours—then we petty agents lay down our implements, and enjoy our leisure in contemplating *his* work.'

I had never known her so communicative; but my pleased attention, instead of drawing her on, led her to check herself. Phœbe, who had been busily employed in trimming a flaunting yellow Azalia, now turned to me, and said —'Why, it is only the Christmas month that our labours are suspended, and then we have so much pleasure that we want no business; such in-door festivities and diversions, that the dull month is with us the gayest in the year.' So saying she called Lucilla to assist her in tying up the branch of an orange-tree, which the wind had broken.

I was going to offer my services when Mrs. Stanley joined us, before I could obtain an answer to my question about these Christmas diversions. A stranger, who had seen me pursuing Mrs. Stanley in her walks, might have supposed not the daughter, but the mother was the object of my attachment. But with Mrs. Stanley I could always talk of Lucilla, with Lucilla I durst not often talk of herself.

The fond mother and I stood looking with delight on the fair gardeners. When I had admired their alacrity in these innocent pursuits, their fondness for retirement, and their cheerful delight in its pleasures; Mrs. Stanley replied, 'yes, Lucilla is half a nun. She likes the rule, but not the vow. Poor thing! her conscience is so tender that she oftener requires encouragement than restraint. While she was making this plantation, she felt herself so absorbed by it, that she came to me one day, and said that her gardening work so fascinated her, that she found whole hours passed unperceived, and she began to be uneasy by observing that all cares and all duties were suspended while she was disposing beds of Carnations, or knots of Anemonies. Even when she tore herself away, and returned to her employments, her flowers still pursued her, and the improvement of her mind gave way to the cultivation of her Geraniums.'

'"I am afraid," said the poor girl, "that I must really give it up." I would not hear of this. I would not suffer her to deny herself so pure a pleasure. She then suggested the expedient of limiting her time, and hanging up her watch in the conservatory to keep her within her prescribed bounds. She is so observant of this restriction, that when her allotted time is expired, she forces herself to leave off even in the most interesting operation. By this limitation a treble end is answered. Her time is saved, self-denial is exercised, and the interest which would languish, by protracting the work is kept in fresh vigour.' I told Mrs. Stanley that I had observed her watch hanging in a citron tree the day I came, but little thought it had a moral meaning. She said, 'it had never been left there since I had been in the house for fear of causing interrogatories.' Here Mrs. Stanley left me to my meditations.

It was wisely ordered that all mortal enjoyment should have some alloy. I never tasted a pleasure since I had been at the Grove, I never witnessed a grace, I never heard related an excellence of Lucilla without a sigh that my beloved parents did not share my happiness. 'How would they,' said I, delight in her delicacy, rejoice in her piety, love her benevolence, admire her humility, her usefulness! O how do children feel, who wound the peace of *living* parents by an unworthy choice, when not a little of my comfort springs from the certainty that the departed would rejoice in mine! Even from their blessed abode, my grateful heart seems to

hear them say, 'This is the creature with whom we shall rejoice with thee through all eternity!'

Yet such was my inconsistency, that charmed as I was, that so young and lovely a woman could be so cheaply pleased, and delighted with that simplicity of taste which made her resemble my favourite heroine of Milton in her amusements as well as in her domestic pursuits; still I longed to know what those Christmas diversions, so slightly hinted at, could be; diversions which could reconcile these girls to their absence not only from their green-house, but from London. I could hardly fear indeed to find at Stanley Grove what the newspapers pertly call *Private Theatricals*. Still I suspected it might be some gay dissipation, not quite suited to their general character, nor congenial to their amusements. My mother's favourite rule of *consistency* strongly forced itself on my mind, though I tried to repel the suggestion as unjust and ungenerous.

Of what meannesses will not love be guilty! It drove me to have recourse to my friend Mrs. Comfit to dissipate my doubts.—From her I learned that that cold and comfortless season was mitigated at Stanley Grove by several feasts for the poor of different classes and ages. 'Then, Sir,' continued she, 'if you could see the blazing fires, and the abundant provisions! the roasting, and the boiling, and the baking. The house is all alive! On those days the drawers and shelves of Miss Lucilla's store-room are completely emptied. 'Tis the most delightful bustle, Sir, to see our young ladies tying on the good women's warm cloaks, fitting their caps and aprons, and sending home blankets to the infirm who cannot come themselves.—The very little ones kneeling down on the ground to try on the poor girl's shoes; even little Miss Celia; and she is so tender to fit them exactly, and not hurt them! Last feast-day, not finding a pair small enough for a poor little girl, she privately slipt off her own and put on the child. It was some time before it was discovered that she herself was without shoes. We are all alive, Sir. Parlour, and hall, and kitchen, all is in motion! Books, and business, and walks, and gardening, all is forgotten for these few happy days.'

How I hated myself for my suspicion!—And how I loved the charming creatures who could find in these humble but exhilirating duties, an equivalent for the pleasures of the metropolis! 'Surely,' said I to myself, 'my mother would call *this* consistency, when the amusements of a religious family smack of the same flavour with its business and its duties.' My heart was more than easy; it was dilated, while I congratulated myself in the thought that there *were* young ladies to be found who could spend a winter not only unrepiningly, but cheerfully and delightedly in the country.

I am aware that were I to repeat my conversations with Lucilla, I should subject myself to ridicule, by recording such cold and spiritless discourse on my own part. But I had not yet declared my attachment. I made it a point of duty not to violate my engagement with Mr. Stanley. I was not addressing declarations, but studying the character of her on whom the happiness of my life was to depend. I had resolved not to show my attachment by any overt act. I confined the expression of my affection to that *series of small, quiet attentions*, which an accurate judge of the human heart has pronounced to be the surest avenue to a delicate mind. I had, in the mean time, the inexpressible felicity to observe a constant union of feeling, as well as a general consonancy of opinion between us. Every sentiment seemed a reciprocation of sympathy, and every look, of intelligence. This unstudied correspondence enchanted me the more, as I had always considered that a conformity of tastes was nearly as necessary to conjugal happiness, as a conformity of principles.

CHAP. XXXIV.

One morning I took a ride alone to breakfast at Lady Aston's, Mr. Stanley having expressed a particular desire that I should cultivate the acquaintance of her son. 'Sir George is not quite twenty,' said he, 'and your being a few years older, will make him consider your friendship as an honour to him: I am sure it will be an advantage.'

In her own little family circle, I had the pleasure of seeing Lady Aston appear to more advantage than I had yet done. Her understanding is good, and her affections are strong. She had received a too favourable prepossession of my character from Mr. Stanley, and treated me with as much openness as if I had been his son.

The gentle girls, animated by the spirit of their brother, seemed to derive both happiness and importance from his presence; while the amiable young Baronet himself won my affection by his engaging manners, and my esteem by his good sense, and his considerable acquirements in every thing which becomes a gentleman.

This visit exemplified a remark I had sometimes made, that shy characters, who from natural timidity are reserved in general society, open themselves with peculiar warmth and frankness to a few select friends, or to an individual of whom they think kindly. A distant manner is not always, as is suspected, the result of a cold heart, or a dull head; nor is gaiety necessarily connected with feeling. High animal spirits, though they often evaporate in mere talk, yet by their warmth and quickness of motion, obtain the credit of strong sensibility; a sensibility however, of which the heart is not always the fountain. While in the timid, that silence, which is construed into pride, indifference, or want of capacity, is often the effect of keen feelings. Friendship is the genial climate in which such hearts disclose themselves; they flourish in the shade, and kindness alone makes them expand. A keen discerner will often detect, in such characters, qualities which are not always connected with

> The rattling tongue
> Of saucy and audacious eloquence.

When people who have seen little of each other are thrown together, nothing brings on

free communication so quickly or so pleasantly, as their being both intimate with a third person, for whom all parties entertain one common sentiment. Mr. Stanley seemed always a point of union between his neighbours and me.

After various topics had been discussed, Lady Aston remarked, that she could now trace the goodness of Providence in having so ordered events, as to make those things which she had so much dreaded at the time, work out advantages which could not have been otherwise obtained for her.

'I had a singular aversion,' added she, 'to the thoughts of removing to this place, and quitting Sir George's estate in Warwickshire, where I had spent the happiest years of my life. When I had the misfortune to lose him,' (here a tear quietly strayed down her cheek,) 'I resolved never to remove from the place where he died. I had fully persuaded myself that it was a duty to do all I could to cherish grief. I obliged myself, as a law, to spend whole hours every day in walking round the place where he was buried.—These melancholy visits, the intervals of which were filled with tears, prayers, and reading a few good but not well chosen books, made up the whole round of my sad existence. I had nearly forgotten that I had any duties to perform, that I had any mercies left. Almost all the effect which the sight of my children produced in me was, by their resemblance to their father, to put me in mind of what I had lost.

I was not sufficiently aware how much more truly I should have honoured his memory, by training his lively representatives, in such a manner, as he, had he been living, would have approved. 'My dear George,' said she, smiling at her son, through her tears, 'was glad to get away to school, and my poor girls, when they lost the company of their brother, lost all the little cheerfulness which my recluse habits had left them. We sunk into total inaction, and our lives became as comfortless as they were unprofitable.'

'My dear Madam,' said Sir George, in the most affectionate tone and manner, 'I can only forgive myself from the consideration of my being then too young and thoughtless to know the value of the mother, whose sorrows ought to have endeared my home to me, instead of driving me from it.'

'They are *my* faults, my dear George, and not yours that I am relating. Few mothers would have acted like me; few sons differently from you. Your affectionate heart deserved a warmer return than my broken spirits were capable of making you. But I was telling you, Sir,' said she, again addressing herself to me, 'that the event of my coming to this place, not only became the source of my present peace, and of the comfort of my children, but that its result enables me to look forward with a cheerful hope to that state where there is neither sin, sorrow, nor separation. The thoughts of death, which used to render me useless, now make me only serious. The reflection that 'the night cometh,' which used to extinguish my activity, now kindles it.

'Forgive me, Sir,' added she, wiping her eyes, 'these are not such tears as I then shed. These are tears of gratitude, I had almost said of joy. In the family at the Grove, Providence had been providing for me friends, for whom, I doubt not, I shall bless him in eternity.

'I had long been convinced of the importance of religion. I had always felt the insufficiency of the world to bestow happiness; but I had never before beheld religion in such a form. I had never been furnished with a proper substitute for the worldly pleasures which I yet despised, I did right in giving up diversions, but I did wrong in giving up employment, and in neglecting duties. I knew something of religion as a principle of fear, but I had no conception of it as a motive to the love of God, and as the spring of active duty; nor did I consider it as a source of inward peace. Books had not been of any great service to me, for I had no one to guide me in the choice, or to assist me in the perusal. I went to my daily task of devotion with a heavy heart, and returned from it with no other sense of comfort but that I had not omitted it.

'My former friends and acquaintances had been decent and regular; but they had adopted religion as a form, and not as a principle. It was compliance and not conviction. It was conformity to custom, and not the persuasion of the heart. Judge then how I must have been affected, in a state when sorrow and disappointment had made my mind peculiarly impressible, with the conversation and example of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley! I saw in them that religion was not a formal profession, but a powerful principle. It ran through their whole life and character. All the Christian graces were brought into action in a way, with a uniformity and a beauty, which nothing but Christian motives could have effected.

'The change which took place in my own mind, however, was progressive. The strict consonance which I observed between their sentiments and actions, and those of Dr. Barlow and Mr. Jackson strengthened and confirmed mine. This similarity in all points, was a fresh confirmation that they were all right. The light of religion gradually grew stronger, and the way more smooth. It was literally a 'lamp to my feet,' for I walked more safely as I saw more clearly. My difficulties insensibly lessened, and my doubts disappeared. I still indeed continue hourly to feel much cause to be humbled, but none to be unhappy.'

When Lady Aston had done speaking, Sir George said, 'I owe a thousand obligations to my mother, but not one so great as her introduction of me to Mr. Stanley. He has given a bent and bias to my sentiments, habits and pursuits, to which I trust every day will add fresh strength. I look up to him as my model: happy if I may, in any degree, be able to form myself by it! Till I had the happiness of knowing you, Sir, I preferred the company of Dr. Barlow and Mr. Stanley, to that of any *young* man with whom I am acquainted.'

After some further conversation, in which Sir George, with great credit to himself, bore a considerable part; Miss Aston took courage to ask me if I would accompany them all into the garden, as she wished me to carry home intelligence to Miss Stanley, of the flourishing state

of some American plants, which had been raised under her direction. To speak the truth, I had for some time been trying to bring Lucilla on the tapis, but had not found a plausible pretence, I now inquired if Miss Stanley directed their gardening pursuits. 'She directs *all* our pursuits,' said the two bashful, blushing girls, who now, for the first time in their lives, spoke both at once; the subject kindling an energy in their affectionate hearts, which even their timidity could not rein in.

'I thought Clara,' said Sir George, 'that Miss *Phœbe* Stanley too had assisted in laying out the flower garden. Surely she is not behind her sister in any thing that is kind, or any thing that is elegant.' His complexion heightened as he spoke, and he expressed himself with an emphasis, which I had not before observed in his manner of speaking. I stole a glance at Lady Aston, whose meek eye glistened with pleasure, at the earnestness with which her son spoke of the lovely Phœbe. My rapid imagination instantly shot forward to an event, which some years hence will probably unite two families so worthy of each other. Lady Aston, who already honours me with her confidence, afterwards confirmed my suspicions on a subject, about which nothing but the extreme youth of both parties made her backward to express the secret hope she fondly entertained.

In our walk round the gardens, the Miss Astons continued to vie with each other, who should be warmest in the praise of our young friends at the Grove. To Miss Stanley they gratefully declared, they owed any little taste, knowledge, or love of goodness which they themselves might possess.

It was delightful to observe these quiet girls warmed and excited by a subject so interesting. I was charmed to see them so far from feeling any shadow of envy at the avowed superiority of their young friends, and so unanimously eloquent in the praise of merit so eclipsing.

After having admired the plants of which I promised to make a favourable report, I was charged with a large and beautiful bouquet for the young ladies at the Grove. They then drew me to the prettiest spot in the grounds. While I was admiring it, Miss Clara, with a blush, and some hesitation, begged leave to ask my advice about a little rustic building, which she and her sisters were just going to raise in honour of the Miss Stanleys. It was to be dedicated to them, and called the Temple of Friendship. 'My brother,' said she, 'is kindly assisting us. The materials are all prepared, and we have now only to fix them up.'

She then put into my hands a little plan. I highly approved it; venturing, however, to suggest some trifling alterations, which I told them I did in order to implicate myself a little in the pleasant project. How proud was I when Clara added, 'that Miss Stanley had expressed a high opinion of my general taste!'—They all begged me to look in on them in my rides, and assist them with my farther counsel; adding that, above all things, I must keep it a secret at the Grove.

Lady Aston said, 'that she expected our whole party to dine at the Hall, some day next week.' Her daughters entreated that it might be postponed till the latter end, by which time they doubted not their little edifice would be completed. Sir George then told me, that his sisters had requested him to furnish an inscription, or to endeavour to procure one from me. He added his wishes to theirs that I would comply. They all joined so earnestly in the entreaty that I could not withstand them, 'albeit unused to the *rhyming* mood.'

After some deliberation, Friday in the next week was fixed upon for the party at the Grove to dine at Aston-Hall, and I was to carry the invitation. I took a respectful leave of the excellent Lady of the mansion, and an affectionate one of the young people; with whom the familiar intercourse of this quiet morning had contributed to advance my friendly acquaintance, more than could have been done by many ceremonious meetings.

When I returned to the Grove, which was but just in time to dress for dinner, I spoke with sincere satisfaction of the manner in which I had passed the morning. It was beautiful to observe the honest delight, the ingenuous kindness, with which Lucilla heard me commend the Miss Astons. No little disparaging hint on the one hand, gently to let down her friends, nor on the other, no such exaggerated praise as I have sometimes seen employed as a screen for envy, or as a trap to make the hearer lower what the speaker had too highly raised.

I dropped in at Aston-Hall two or three times in the course of the week, as well to notice the progress of the work, as to carry my inscription, in which as Lucilla was both my subject and my muse, I succeeded rather better than I expected.

On the Friday, according to appointment, our whole party went to dine in the Hall. In our way, Mr. Stanley expressed the pleasure it gave him, that Lady Aston was now so convinced of the duty of making home agreeable to her son, as delightedly to receive such of her friends as were warmly disposed to become his.

Sir George, who is extremely well-bred, did the honours admirably for so young a man, to the great relief of his excellent mother, whom long retirement had rendered habitually timid in a party, of which some were almost strangers.

The Miss Astons had some difficulty to restrain their young guests from running directly to look at the progress of the American plants; but as they grew near the mysterious spot, they were not allowed to approach it before the allotted time.

After dinner, when the whole party were walking in the garden, Lady Aston, was desired by her daughters to conduct her company to a winding grass walk, near the little building, but from whence it was not visible. While they were all waiting at the appointed place, the two elder Miss Astons gravely took a hand of Lucilla, Sir George and I each presented a hand to Phœbe, and in profound silence, and great ceremony, we led them up the turf steps into this simple, but really pretty temple. The initials of Lucilla and Phœbe were carved in

cyphers over a little rustic window, under which was written,

Sacred to Friendship.

In two niches prepared for the purpose, we severally seated the two astonished nymphs, who seemed absolutely enchanted. Above was the inscription in large Roman letters.

The Astons looked so much alive, that they might have been mistaken for Stanleys, who in their turn, were so affected with this tender mark of friendship, that they looked as tearful as though they had been Astons. After reading the inscription, 'my dear Clara,' said Lucilla to Miss Aston, 'where *could* you get these beautiful verses?' Though the praise they convey is too flattering to be just, it is too delicate not to please. The lines are at once tender and elegant.' 'We got them,' said Miss Aston, with a sweet vivacity, 'where we get every thing that is good, from Stanley Grove,' bowing modestly to me.

How was I elated; and how did Lucilla blush! but though she now tried to qualify her flattery, she could not recal it. And I would not allow myself to be robbed of the pure delight it had given me. All the company seemed to enjoy her confusion and my pleasure.

I forgot to mention, that as we crossed the park, we had seen enter the house, through a back avenue, a procession of little girls neatly dressed in a uniform. In a whisper, I asked Lady Aston what it meant, 'you are to know,' replied her ladyship, 'that my daughters adopt all Miss Stanley's plans, and among the rest, that of associating with all their own indulgences some little act of charity, that while they are receiving pleasure, they may also be conferring it. The opening of the Temple of Friendship, is likely to afford too much gratification to be passed over without some such association. So my girls give to day a little feast, with prizes of merit, to their village school, and to a few other deserving young persons.'

When we had taken our seats in the temple, Phœbe suddenly cried out, clasping her hands in an ecstacy, 'Only look Lucilla! There is no end to the enchantment. It is all fairy land.' On casting our eyes as she directed, we were agreeably surprised with observing a large kind of temporary shed or booth at some distance from us. It was picturesquely fixed near an old spreading oak, and was ingeniously composed of branches of trees, fresh and green. Under the oak stood ranged the village maids. We walked to the spot. The inside of the booth was hung round with caps, aprons, bonnets, handkerchiefs, and other coarse, but neat articles of female dress. On a rustic table was laid a number of Bibles, and specimens of several kinds of coarse works, and little manufactures. The various performances were examined by the company; some presents were given to all. But additional prizes were awarded by the young Patronesses, to the best specimens of different work; to the best spinners, the best knitters, the best manufacturers of split straw, and the best performers in plain work, I think they called it.

Three grown up young women, neatly dressed, and of modest manner, stood behind. It appeared that one of them had taken such good care of her young sisters and brothers, since their mother's death, and had so prudently managed their father's house, that it had saved him from an imprudent second choice. Another had postponed for many months a marriage, in which her heart was engaged, because she had a paralytic grandmother whom she attended day and night, and whom nothing, not even love itself, could tempt her to desert. Death had now released the aged sufferer, the wedding was to take place next Sunday. The third had for above a year worked two hours every day, over and above her set time, and applied the gains to clothe the orphan child of a deceased friend. She also was to accompany her lover to the altar on Sunday, but had made it a condition of her marrying him, that she should be allowed to continue her supernumerary hours work, for the benefit of the poor orphan. All three had been exemplary in their attendance at church, as well as in their general conduct. The fair Patronesses presented each with a handsome Bible, and with a complete, plain, but very neat suit of apparel.

While these gifts were distributing, I whispered Sir John that one such ticket as we were desired to take for Squallini's benefit, would furnish the cottages of these poor girls. 'And it *shall*,' replied he with emphasis. 'How little a way will that sum go in superfluities, which will make two honest couple happy! How costly is vanity, how cheap is charity!'

'Can these happy, useful young creatures be my little, inactive, insipid Astons, Charles?' whispered Mr. Stanley, as we walked away to leave the girls to sit down to their plentiful supper, which was spread on a long table under the oak, without the green booth. This group of figures made an interesting addition to the scenery, when we got back to the Temple, and often attracted our attention while we were engaged in conversation.

CHAP. XXXV

The company were not soon weary of admiring the rustic building, which seemed raised as if by the stroke of a magician's wand, so rapidly had it sprung up. They were delighted to find that their pleasure was to be prolonged by drinking tea in the temple.

While we were at tea Mr. Stanley, addressing himself to me, said, 'I have always forgotten to ask you, Charles, if your high expectations of pleasure from the society in London had been quite answered?'

'I was entertained, and I was disappointed,' replied I. 'I always found the pleasure of the moment not heightened but effaced by the succeeding moment. The ever restless, rolling tide of new intelligence at once gratified and excited the passion of novelty, which I found to be *le grand poisson qui mange les petits*. This successive abundance of fresh supply gives an ephemeral importance to every thing, and a lasting importance to nothing. We skimmed every topic, but dived into none. Much desultory talk, but little discussion. The comba-

tants skirmished like men whose arms were kept bright by constant use; who were accustomed to a flying fight, but who avoided the fatigue of coming to close quarters. What was old, however momentous, was rejected as dull, what was new, however insignificant, was thought interesting. Events of the past week were placed with those beyond the flood; and the very existence of occurrences which continue to be matter of deep interest with us in the country, seemed there totally forgotten.

'I found, too, that the inhabitants of the metropolis had a standard of merit of their own; that knowledge of the town was concluded to be knowledge of the world; that local habits, reigning phrases, temporary fashions, and an acquaintance with the surface of manners, was supposed to be knowledge of mankind. Of course, he who was ignorant of the topics of the hour, and the anecdotes of a few modish leaders, was ignorant of human nature.'

Sir John observed, that I was rather too young to be a *praiser of past times*, yet he allowed that the standard of conversation was not so high as it had been in the time of my father, by whose reports my youthful ardour had been inflamed. He did not indeed suppose that men were less intellectual now, but they certainly were less colloquially intellectual. 'For this,' added he, 'various reasons may be assigned. In London man is every day becoming less of a social, and more of a gregarious animal. Crowds are as little favourable to conversation as to reflection. He finds, therefore, that he may figure in the mass with less expense of mind: and as to women they figure at no expense at all. They find that by mixing with myriads, they may carry on the daily intercourse of life, without being obliged to bring a single idea to enrich the common stock.'

'I do not wonder,' said I, 'that the dull and uninformed love to shelter their insignificance in a crowd. In mingling with the multitude, their deficiencies elude detection. The vapid and the ignorant are like a bad play; they owe the little figure they make to the dress, the scenery, the music, and the company. The noise and the glare take off all attention from the defects of the work. The spectator is amused, and he does not inquire whether it is with the piece or the accompaniments. The end is attained, and he is little solicitous about the means. But an intellectual woman, like a well written drama, will please at home without all these aids and adjuncts, nay the beauties of the superior piece, and of the superior woman, will rise on a more intimate survey. But you were going, Sir John, to assign other causes for the decline and fall of conversation.'

'One very affecting reason,' replied he, 'is that the alarming state of public affairs fills all men's minds with one momentous object. As every Englishman is a patriot, every patriot is a politician. It is natural that that subject should fill every mouth, which occupies every heart, and that little room should be left for extraneous matter.'

'I should accept this,' said I, 'as a satisfactory vindication, had I heard that the same absorbing cause had thinned the public places, or diminished the attraction of the private resorts of dissipation.'

'There is a third reason,' said Sir John, 'polite literature has in a good degree given way to experimental philosophy. The admirers of science assert, that the last was an age of words, and that this is the age of things. A more substantial kind of knowledge has partly superseded these elegant studies, which have caught such hold on your affections.'

'I heartily wish,' replied I, 'that the new pursuits may be found to make men wiser; they certainly have not made them more agreeable.'

'It is affirmed,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that the prevailing philosophical studies have a religious use, and that they naturally tend to elevate the heart to the great Author of the Universe.'

'I have but one objection to that assertion,' replied Sir John, 'namely, that it is not true. This should seem indeed, to be their direct tendency; yet experiment, which you know is the soul of philosophy, has proved the contrary.'

He then adduced some instances in our country, which I forbear to name, that clearly evinced, that this was not their necessary consequence; adding, however, a few great names on the more honourable side. He next adverted to the Baillies, the Condorsets, the D'Alamberts, and the Lalandes, as melancholy proofs of the inefficacy of mere science to make Christians.

'Far be it from me,' said Sir John, 'to undervalue philosophical pursuits. The modern discoveries are extremely important, especially in their application to the purposes of common life; but where these are pursued exclusively, I cannot help preferring the study of the great classic authors, those exquisite masters of life and manners, with whose spirited conversation, twenty or thirty years ago, was so richly impregnated.'

'I confess,' said I, 'that there may be more matter, but there is certainly less mind in the reigning pursuits. The reputation of skill, it is true, may be obtained at a much less expense of time and intellect. The comparative cheapness of the acquisition holds out the powerful temptation of more credit with less labour. A sufficient knowledge of botany or chemistry to make a figure in company is easily obtained, while a thorough acquaintance with the historians, poets, and orators of antiquity requires much time, and close application.' 'But,' exclaimed Sir John, 'can the fashionable studies pretend to give the same expansion to the mind, the same elevation to the sentiments, the same energy to the feelings, the same stretch and compass to the understanding, the same correctness to the taste, the same grace and spirit to the whole moral and intellectual man?'

'For my own part,' replied I, 'so far from saying with Hamlet, 'Man delights not me, nor woman neither,' I confess, I have little delight in any thing else. The study of the human mind, is, of merely human studies, my chief pleasure. As a man, man is the creature with whom I have to do, and the varieties in his character interest me more than all the possible varieties of mosses, and shells, and fossils. To view this compound creature in the complexity of his actions, as portrayed by the hand of those

immortal masters, Tacitus and Plutarch; to view him in the struggle of his passions, as displayed by Euripides and Shakspeare: to contemplate him in the blaze of his eloquence, by the two rival orators of Greece and Rome, is more congenial to my feelings, than the ablest disquisition of which matter was ever the subject.' Sir John, who is a passionate, and rather too exclusive an admirer of classic lore, warmly declared himself of my opinion.

'I went to town,' replied I, 'with a mind eager for intellectual pleasure. My memory was not quite unfurnished with passages which I thought likely to be adverted to, and which might serve to embellish conversation, without incurring the charge of pedantry. But though, most of the men I conversed with were my equals in education, and my superiors in talent, there seemed little disposition to promote such topics as might bring our understanding into play. Whether it is that business, active life, and public debate, absorb the mind, and make men consider society rather as a scene to rest than to exercise it, I know not; certain it is that they brought less into the treasury of conversation than I expected; not because they were poor, but proud, or idle, and reserved their talents and acquisitions for higher occasions. The most opulent possessors, I often found the most penurious contributors.'

'*Rien de trop*,' said Mr. Stanley, 'was the favourite maxim of an author,* whom I am not apt to quote for rules of moral conduct. Yet its adoption would be a salutary check against excess in all our pursuits. If polite learning is undervalued by the mere man of letters: If it dignifies retirement, and exalts society, it is not the great business of life; it is not the prime fountain of moral excellence.'

'Well, so much for *man*,' said Sir John, 'but Charles, you have not told us what you had to say of *women*, in your observations on society.'

'As to women,' replied I, 'I declare that I found more propensity to promote subjects of taste and elegant speculation among some of the superior class of females, than in many of my own sex. The more prudent, however, are restrained through fear of the illiberal sarcasms of men, who not contented to suppress their own faculties, ridicule all intellectual exertion in women, though evidently arising from a modest desire of improvement, and not the vanity of hopeless rivalry.'

'Charles is always the Paladin of the reading ladies,' said Sir John. 'I do not deny it,' replied I, 'if they bear their faculties meekly. But I confess that what is sneeringly called a learned lady is to me far preferable to a scientific one, such as I encountered one evening, who talked of the fulcrum, and the lever, and the statera, which she took care to tell us was the Roman steel-yard, with all the sang-froid of philosophical conceit.'

'Scientific men,' said Sir John, 'are in general admirable for their simplicity, but in a technical woman I have seldom found a grain of taste or elegance.'

'I own,' replied I, 'I should greatly prefer a fair companion, who could modestly discriminate between the beauties of Virgil and Milton, to one who was always dabbling in chemistry, and who came to dinner with dirty hands from the labratory. And yet I admire chemistry too; I am now only speaking of that knowledge which is desirable in a female companion; for knowledge I must have. But arts, which are of immense value in manufactures, won't make my wife's conversation entertaining to me. Discoveries which may greatly improve dyeing and bleaching, will add little to the delights of our summer evening's walk, or winter fireside.'

The ladies, Lucilla especially, smiled at my warmth. I felt that there was approbation in her smile, and though I had said too much already, it encouraged me to go on.—'I repeat that, next to religion, whatever relates to human manners, is most attracting to human creatures. To turn from conversation to composition. What is it that excites so feeble an interest, in perusing that finely written poem of the *Abbe de Lille*, '*Les Jardins!*' It is because his garden has no cultivators, no inhabitants, no men and women. What confers that powerful charm on the descriptive parts of Paradise Lost? A fascination, I will venture to affirm, paramount to the lovely and magnificent scenery which adorns it. Eden itself, with all its exquisite landscape, would excite a very inferior pleasure did it exhibit only inanimate beauties. 'Tis the proprietors, 'tis the inhabitants, 'tis the *live stock* of Eden, which sieze upon the affections, and twine about the heart. The gardens, even of Paradise, would be dull without the gardeners. 'Tis mental excellence, 'tis moral beauty, which completes the charm. Where this is wanting, landscape poetry, though it may be read with pleasure, yet the interest it raises is cold. It is admired, but seldom remembered, praised, but seldom quoted. It leaves no definite idea on the mind. If general, it is indistinct; if minute, tedious.'

'It must be confessed,' said Sir John, 'that some poets are apt to forget that the finest representation of nature is only the scene, not the object; the canvass, not the portrait. We had indeed some time ago, so much of this gorgeous scene-painting, so much splendid poetical botany, so many amorous flowers, and so many vegetable courtships; so many wedded plants; roots transformed to nymphs, and dwelling in emerald palaces; that some how or other truth, and probability, and nature and man, slipt out of the picture, though it must be allowed that genius held the pencil.'

'In Mason's English Garden,' replied I, 'Alcander's precepts would have been no personification. The introduction of character dramatizes what else would have been frigidly didactic. Thompson enriched his landscape with here and there a figure, drawn with more correctness than warmth, with more nature than spirit, but exalts it every where by moral allusion and religious reference. The scenery of Cowper is perpetually animated with sketches of character, enlivened with portraits from real life, and the exhibition of human manners and passions. His most exquisite descriptions owe their vividness to moral illustration.—Loyalty,

* Frederick the Great, King of Prussia.

liberty, patriotism, charity, piety, benevolence, every generous feeling, every glowing sentiment, every ennobling passion, grows out of his descriptive powers. His matter always bursts into mind. His shrubbery, his forest, his flower garden, all produce

Fruits worthy of Paradise,

and lead to immortality.'

Mr. Stanley said, adverting again to the subject of conversation, it was an amusement to him to observe, what impression the first introduction to general society made conversant with books, but to whom the world was in a manner new.

'I believe,' said Sir John, 'that an overflowing commerce, and the excessive opulence it has introduced, though favourable to all the splendours of art, and mechanic ingenuity, yet have lowered the standard of taste, and debilitated the mental energies.—They are advantageous to luxury, but fatal to intellect. It has added to the brilliancy of the drawing-room itself, but deducted from that of the inhabitant. It has given perfection to our mirrors, our candelabras, our gilding, our inlaying and our sculpture, but it has communicated a torpor to the imagination, and enervated our intellectual vigour.'

'In one way,' said Mr. Stanley, smiling, 'luxury has been favourable to literature.—From the unparalleled splendour of our printing, paper, engraving, illuminating, and binding, luxury has caused more books to be purchased, while, from the growth of time-absorbing dissipation, it causes fewer to be read. Even where books are not much considered as the vehicle of instruction they are become an indispensable appendage to elegance. But I believe we were much more familiar with our native poets in their former plain garb, than since they have been attired in the gorgeous dress which now decorates our shelves.

'Poetry,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'has of late too much degenerated into personal satire, persiflage and caricature, among one class of writers; while among another it has exhibited the vagrancies of genius, without the inspiration; the exuberance of fancy, without the curb of judgment, and the eccentricities of invention, without the restrictions of taste. The image has been strained, while the verse has been slackened. We have had pleonasm without fulness, and facility without force. Redundancy has been mistaken for plenitude, flimsiness for ease, and distortion for energy. An over desire of being natural, has made the poet feeble, and the rage for being simple has sometimes made him silly. The sensibility is sickly, and the elevation virtiginous.

'To Cowper,' said Sir John, 'master of melody as he is, the mischief is partly attributable. Such an original must naturally have a herd of imitators. If they cannot attain to his excellences, his faults are always attainable. The resemblance between the master and the scholar is found chiefly in his defects. The determined imitator of an easy writer becomes vapid, of a sublime one, absurd. Cowper's ease appeared his most imitable charm: but ease aggravated is insipidity. His occasional negligences his disciples adopted uniformly. In Cowper there might sometimes be carelessness in the verse, but the verse itself was sustained by the vigour of the sentiment. The imitator forgot that his strength lay in the thought; that his buoyant spirit always supported itself, that the figure though amplified was never distorted; the image though bold was never incongruous, and the illustration though new was never false.

'The evil, however,' continued Sir John, 'seems to be correcting itself. The real genius, which exists in several of this whimsical school, I trust, will at length lead them to prune their excrescences, and reform their youthful eccentricities. Their good sense will teach them that the surest road to fame, is to condescend to tread in the luminous track of their great pregursors in the art. They will see that deviation is not always improvement; that whoever wants to be better than nature, will infallibly be worse; that truth in taste is as obvious as in morals, and as certain as in mathematics. In other quarters, both the classic and the Gothic music are emulously soaring, and I hail the restoration of genuine poetry and pure taste.'

'I must not,' said I, 'loquacious as I have already been, dismiss the subject of conversation, without remarking that I found there was one topic, which seemed as uniformly avoided by common consent, as if it had been banished by the interdict of absolute authority; and that some forfeiture, or at least dishonour and disgrace, were to follow it on conviction—I mean religion.'

'Surely, Charles,' said Sir John, 'you would not convert general conversation into a divinity school, and friendly societies into debating clubs.'

'Far from it,' replied I, 'nor do I desire that ladies and gentlemen over their tea and coffee should rehearse their articles of faith, or fill the intervals of carving and eating with introducing dogmas, or discussing controversies. I do not wish to erect the social table, which was meant for innocent relaxation, into an arena for theological combatants. I only wish, as people live so much together, that if, when out of the multitude of topics which arise in conversation, an unlucky wight happens to start a serious thought, I could see a cordial recognition of its importance; I wish I could see a disposition to pursue it, instead of a chilling silence which obliges him to draw in, as if he had dropt something dangerous to the state, or inimical to the general cheerfulness, or derogatory to his own understanding. I only desire, that as, without any effort on the part of the speaker, but merely from the overflowing fulness of a mind habitually occupied with one leading concern, we easily perceive that one of the company is a lawyer, another a soldier, a third a physician; I only wish, that we could oftener discover from the same plenitude, so hard to conceal where it exists, that we were in a company of Christians.'

'We must not expect in our days,' said Mr. Stanley, 'to see revive that animating picture of the prevalence of religious intercourse given by the prophet. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." And yet one cannot but regret that, in select society, men well informed as we know, well principled as

we hope, having one common portion of being to fill, having one common faith, one common father, one common journey to perform, one common termination to that journey, and one common object in view beyond it, should, when together, be so unwilling to advert occasionally to these great points, which doubtless often occupy them in secret; that they should on the contrary adopt a sort of inverted hypocrisy, and wish to appear worse than they really are; that they should be so backward to give or to gain information, to lend or to borrow lights, in a matter in which they are all equally interested; which cannot be the case in any other possible subject.'

'In all human concerns,' said I, 'we find that those dispositions, tastes, and affections, which are brought into exercise, flourish, while others are smothered, by concealment. 'It is certain,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'that knowledge which is never brought forward, is apt to decline. Some feelings require to be excited, in order to know if they exist. In short, topics of every kind, which are kept totally out of sight, make a fainter impression on the mind than such as are occasionally introduced. Communication is a great strengthener of any principle. Feelings, as well as ideas, are often elicited by collision. Thoughts that are never to be produced, in time seldom present themselves, while mutual interchange almost creates as well as cultivates them. And as to the social affections, I am persuaded that men would love each other more cordially; good will and kindness would be inconceivably promoted, were they in the habit of maintaining that sort of intercourse, which would keep up a mutual regard for their eternal interests, and lead them more to consider each other as candidates for the same immortality through the same common hope.'

Just as he had ceased to speak, we heard a warbling of female voices, which came softened to us by distance and the undulation of the air. The little band under the oak had finished their cheerful repast, and arranged themselves in the same regular procession in which they had arrived. They still stood at a respectful distance from the temple, and in their artless manner sung Addison's beautiful version of the twenty-third psalm, which the Miss Astons had taught them because it was a favourite with their mother.

Here the setting sun reminded us to retreat to the house. Before we quitted the temple, however, Sir George Aston ventured modestly to intimate a wish, that if it pleased the Almighty to spare our lives, the same party should engage always to celebrate this anniversary in the Temple of Friendship, which should be finished on a larger scale, and rendered less unworthy to receive such guests. The ladies smiled assentingly. Phœbe applauded rapturously. Sir John Belfield and I warmly approved the proposal. Mr. Stanley said, it could not but meet with his cordial concurrence, as it would involve the assurance of an annual visit from his valued friends.

As we walked into the house, Lady Aston, who held by my arm, in answer to the satisfaction I expressed at the day I had passed, said, 'We owe what little we are and do under Providence to Mr. Stanley. You will admire his discriminating mind, when I tell you that he recommends these little exhibitions for my daughters far more than to his own. He says, that they, being naturally cheerful and habitually active, require not the incentive of company to encourage them. But that for my poor timid inactive girls, the support and animating presence of a few chosen friends, just gives them that degree of life and spirit which serves to warm their hearts, and keep their minds in motion.'

CHAP. XXXVI.

Miss Sparkes came to spend the next day, according to her appointment. Mr. Flam, who called accidentally staid to dinner. Mr. and Mrs. Carlton had been previously invited. After dinner, the conversation chanced to turn upon domestic economy, a quality which Miss Sparkes professed to hold in the most sovereign contempt.

After some remarks of Mrs. Stanley, in favour of the household virtues, Mr. Carlton said, Mr. Addison, in the Spectator, and Dr. Johnson, in the Rambler, have each given us a lively picture of a vulgar, ungentlewoman-like, illiterate housewife. The notable woman of the one suffocated her guests at night with drying herbs in their chamber, and tormented them all day with plans of economy, and lectures on management. The economist of the other ruined her husband by her parsimonious extravagance, if I may be allowed to couple contradictions; by her tent-stitch hangings, for which she had no walls, and her embroidery for which she had no use. The poor man pathetically laments her detestable catalogue of made wines, which hurt his fortune by their profusion, and his health by not being allowed to drink them till they were sour. Both ladies are painted as domestic tyrants, whose husbands had no peace, and whose children had no education.'

'Those coarse housewives,' said Sir John, 'were exhibited as *warnings*. It was reserved for the pen of Richardson to exhibit *examples*. This author, with deeper and juster views of human nature, a truer taste for the proprieties of female character, and a more exact intuition into real life, than any other writer of fabulous narrative, has given, in his heroines, exemplifications of elegantly cultivated minds, combined with the sober virtues of domestic economy. In no other writer of fictitious adventures has the triumph of religion and reason over the passions, and the now almost exploded doctrines of filial obedience, and the household virtues, their natural concomitants been so successfully blended. Whether the works of this most original, but by no means faultless writer, were cause or effect, I know not; whether these well-imagined examples induced the ladies of that day 'to study household good;' or whether the then existing ladies, by their acknowledged attention to feminine concerns, furnished Richardson with living models, I cannot determine. Certain it is, that

the novel writers of the subsequent period, have in general been as little disposed to represent these qualities as forming an indispensable part of the female character, as the contemporary young ladies themselves have been to supply them with patterns. I a little fear that the predominance of this sort of reading, has contributed its full share to bring such qualities into contempt.'

Miss Sparkes characteristically observed, that 'the meanest understanding and most vulgar education, were competent to form such a wife as the generality of men preferred. That a man of talents, dreading a rival, always took care to secure himself by marrying a fool.'

'Always except the present company, Madam, I presume,' said Mr. Stanley, laughing. 'But pardon me, if I differ from you. That many men are sensual in their appetites, and low in their relish of intellectual pleasures, I confess. That many others, who are neither sensual, nor of mean attainments, prefer women whose ignorance will favour their indolent habits, and whom it requires no exertion of mind to entertain, I allow also. But permit me to say, that men of the most cultivated minds, men who admire talents in a woman, are still of opinion, that *domestic* talents can never be dispensed with: and I totally dissent from you in thinking that these qualities infer the absence of higher attainments, and necessarily imply a sordid or a vulgar mind.

'Any ordinary art, after it is once discovered, may be practised by a very common understanding. In this, as in every thing else, the kind arrangements of Providence are visible, because, as the common arts employ the mass of mankind, they could not be universally carried on if they were not of easy and cheap attainment. Now cookery is one of these arts, and I agree with you, Madam, in thinking, that a mean understanding, and a vulgar education, suffice to make a good cook. But a cook or housekeeper; and a lady qualified to wield a considerable establishment, are two very different characters. To prepare a dinner, and to conduct a great family, requires talents of a very different size: and one reason why I could never choose to marry a woman ignorant of domestic affairs, is, that she who wants, or she who despises this knowledge, must possess that previous bad judgment which, as it prevented her from seeing this part of her duty, would be likely to operate on other occasions.

'I entirely agree with Mr. Stanley,' said Mr. Carlton. 'In general I look upon the contempt, or the fulfilment, of these duties as pretty certain indications of the turn of mind from which the one or the other proceeds. I allow, however, that *with* this knowledge a lady may unhappily have overlooked more important acquisitions; but *without* it I must ever consider the female character as defective in the texture, however it may be embroidered and spangled on the surface.'

Sir John Belfield declared, that though he had not that natural antipathy to a wit, which some men have; yet unless the wildness of a wit was tamed, like the wildness of other animals by domestic habits, he himself would not choose to venture on one. He added, that he should pay a bad compliment to Lady Belfield, who had so much higher claims to his esteem, if he were to allege that these habits were the determining cause of his choice, yet had he seen no such tendencies in her character, he should have suspected her power of making him as happy as she had done.'

'I confess with shame,' said Mr. Carlton, 'that one of the first things which touched me with any sense of my wife's merit, was the admirable good sense she discovered in the direction of my family. Even at the time that I had most reason to blush at my own conduct, she never gave me cause to blush for hers. The praises constantly bestowed on her elegant yet prudent arrangements, by my friends, flattered my vanity, and raised her in my opinion, though they did not lead me to do her full justice.'

The two ladies who were thus agreeably flattered, looked modestly grateful. Mr. Stanley said, 'I was going to endeavour at removing Miss Sparkes's prejudices, by observing how much this domestic turn brings the understanding into action. The operation of good sense is requisite in making the necessary calculations for a great family in a hundred ways. Good sense is required to teach that a perpetually recurring small expense is more to be avoided than an incidental great one; while it shows that petty savings cannot retrieve an injured estate. The story told by Johnson of a lady, who, while ruining her fortune by excessive splendour and expense, yet refused to let a two shilling mango be cut at her table, exemplifies exactly my idea. Shabby curtailments, without repairing the breach, which prodigality has made, discredit the husband, and bring the reproach of meanness on the wife. Retrenchments to be efficient must be applied to great objects. The true economist will draw in by contracting the outline, by narrowing the bottom, by cutting off with an unsparing hand costly superfluities, which affect not comfort, but cherish vanity.'

'"Retrench the lazy vermin of thine hall," was the wise counsel of the prudent Venetian, to his thoughtless son-in-law,' said Sir John, 'and its wisdom consisted in its striking at one of the most ruinous and prevailing domestic evils, an overloaded establishment.'

If Miss Sparkes had been so long without speaking, it was evident, by her manner and turn of countenance, that contempt had kept her silent, and that she thought the topic under discussion as unworthy of the support of the gentlemen as of her own opposition.

'A discreet woman,' said Mr. Stanley, 'adjusts her expenses to her revenues. Every thing knows its time, and every person his place. She will live within her income, be it large or small; if large, she will not be luxurious, if small she will not be mean. Proportion and propriety are among the best secrets of domestic wisdom; and there is no surer test both of integrity and judgment, than a well-proportioned expenditure.

'Now the point to which I would bring all this verbage,' continued he, 'is this,—will a lady of a mean understanding, or a vulgar edu-

cation, be likely to practise economy on this large scale! And is not such economy a field in which a woman of the best sense may honourably exercise her own powers?'

Miss Sparkes, who was always a staunch opposer in moral as well as in political debate, because she said it was the best side for the exertion of wit and talents, comforted herself that though she felt she was completely in the minority, yet she always thought that was rather a proof of being right than the contrary; for if it be true, that the generality are either weak or wicked, it follows that the inferior number is most likely to be neither.

'Women,' said Mr Carlton, 'in their course of action describe a smaller circle than men; but the perfection of a circle consists not in its dimensions, but in itsc orrectness. There may be,' added he carefully turning away his eyes from Miss Sparkes, 'here and there a soaring female who looks down with disdain on the paltry affairs of "this dim speck called earth," who despises order and regularity as indications of a grovelling spirit. But a sound mind judges directly contrary. The larger the capacity, the wider is the sweep of duties it takes in. A sensible woman loves to imitate that order which is stamped on the whole creation of God. All the operations of nature are uniform even in their changes, and regular in their infinite variety. Nay, the great Author of Nature himself disdains not to be called the God of order.'

'I agree with you,' said Sir John. 'A philosophical lady may 'read Mallebranch, Boyle, and Locke:' she may boast of her intellectual superiority; she may talk of abstract and concrete; of substantial forms and essences; complex ideas and mixed modes, of identity and relation; she may decorate all the logic of one sex with all the rhetoric of the other; yet if her affairs are *delabres*, if her house is disorderly, her servants irregular, her children neglected, and her table ill arranged, she will indicate the want of the most valuable faculty of the human mind, a sound judgment.'

'It must, however, be confessed,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'that such instances are so rare, that the exceptions barely serve to establish the rule. I have known twenty women mismanage their affairs, through a bad education, through ignorance, especially of arithmetic, that grand deficiency in the education of women, through a multiplicity of vain accomplishments, through an excess of dissipation, through a devotedness to personal embellishments, through an absorption of the whole soul in music, for one who has made her husband metaphysically miserable.'

'What marks the distinction,' said Mr. Carlton, 'between the judicious and the vulgar economist is this: the narrow-minded woman succeeds tolerably in the filling up, but never in the outline. She is made up of detail, but destitute of plan. Petty duties demand her whole grasp of mind, and after all the thing is incomplete. There is so much bustle and evident exertion in all she does! she brings into company a mind exhausted with her little efforts! overflowing with a sense of her own merits! looking up to her own performances as the highest possible elevation of the human intellect, and looking down on the attainments of more highly gifted women, as so many obstructions to their usefulness; always drawing comparisons to her own advantage, with the cultivated and the refined, and concluding that because she possesses not their elegance they must necessarily be deficient in her art. While economists of the higher strain, I draw from living and not absent instances,' added he, looking benignantly around him, 'execute their well ordered plan, as an indispensable duty, but not as a superlative merit. They have too much sense to omit it, but they have too much taste to talk of it. It is their business, not their boast. The effect is produced, but the hand which accomplishes it is not seen. The mechanism is set at work, but it is behind the scenes. The beauty is visible, the labour is kept out of sight.'

'The misfortune is,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that people are apt to fancy, that judgment is a faculty only to be exercised on great occasions; whereas it is one that every hour is called into exercise. There are certain habits, which though they appear inconsiderable when examined individually, are yet of no small importance in the aggregate. Exactness, punctuality, and other minor virtues, contribute more than many are aware, to promote and to facilitate the exercise of the higher qualities. I would not erect them into a magnitude beyond their real size; as persons are too apt to do who are *only* punctual, and are deficient in the higher qualities; but by the regular establishment of these habits in a family, it is inconceivable to those who have not made the experiment, how it saves, how it amplifies time, that canvass upon which all virtues must be wrought. It is incredible how an orderly division of the day gives apparent rapidity to the wings of time, while a stated devotion of the hour to its employment really lengthens life. It lengthens it by the traces which solid occupation leaves behind it: while it prevents tediousness by affording, with the successive change, the charm of novelty, and keeping up an interest which would flag, if any one employment were too long pursued. Now all these arrangements of life, these divisions of time, and these selections and appropriations of the business to the hour, come within the department of the lady.' And how much will the cares of a man of sense be relieved, if he choose a wife who can do all this for him!'

'In how many of my friends' houses,' said Mr. Carlton, 'have I observed the contrary habits produce contrary effects? A young lady, bred in total ignorance of family management, transplanted from the house of her father, where she has learnt nothing, to that of her husband, where she is expected to know every thing, disappoints a prudent man: his affection may continue, but his esteem will be diminished; and with his happiness, his attachment to home will be proportionably lessened.'

'It is perfectly just,' said Sir John, 'and this comfortless deficiency has naturally taught men to inveigh against the higher kind of knowledge which they suppose, though unjustly, to be the cause of ignorance in domestic matters. It is not entirely to gratify the animal, as Miss Sparkes supposes, that a gentleman likes to

have his table well appointed; but because his own dignity and his wife's credit are involved in it. The want of this skill is one of the grand evils of modern life. *From the heiress of the man of rank, to the daughter of the opulent tradesman, there is no one quality in which young women are so generally deficient as in domestic economy.* And when I hear learning contended for on one hand, and modish accomplishments on the other, I always contend for this intermediate, this valuable, this neglected quality, so little insisted on, so rarely found, and so indispensably necessary.'

'Besides,' said Mr. Carlton, addressing himself to Miss Sparkes, 'you ladies are apt to consider versatility as a mark of genius. She therefore, who can do a great thing well, ought to do a small one better; for, as Lord Bacon well observes, he who cannot contract his mind as well as dilate it, wants one great talent in life.'

Miss Sparkes, condescending at length to break a silence which she had maintained with evident uneasiness, said, 'all these plodding employments cramp the genius, degrade the intellect, depress the spirits, debase the taste, and clip the wings of imagination. And this poor, cramped, degraded, stinted, depressed, debased creature is the very being whom men, men of reputed sense too, commonly prefer to the mind of large dimensions, soaring fancy, and aspiring tastes.'

'Imagination,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'well directed, is the charm of life; it gilds every object, and embellishes every scene: but allow me to say, that where a woman abandons herself to the dominion of this vagrant faculty, it may lead to something worse than a disorderly table; and the husband may find that the badness of his dinner is not the only ill consequence of her superlunary vagaries.'

'True enough,' said Mr. Flam, who had never been known to be so silent, or so attentive; 'true enough, I have not heard so much sense for a long time. I am sure 'tis sense, because 'tis exactly my own way of thinking. There is my Bell now. I have spent seven hundred pounds, and more money, for her to learn music and whim-whams, which all put together are not worth sixpence. I would give them all up to see her make such a transy-pudding, as that which the widow in the Spectator helped Sir Roger to at dinner: why I don't believe Bell knows whether pie-crust is made of butter or cheese; or whether a venison pasty should be baked or boiled. I can tell her, that when her husband, if she ever gets one, comes in sharp set from hunting, he won't like to be put off with a tune instead of a dinner. To marry a singing girl, and complain she does not keep you a good table, is like eating nightingales, and finding fault that they are not good tasted. They sing, but they are of no further use—to *eat* them, instead of listening to them, is applying to one sense, the gratification which belongs to another.'

In the course of conversation, Miss Sparkes a little shocked the delicate feelings of the ladies, of Lucilla especially, by throwing out some expressions of envy, at the superior advantages which men possess for distinguishing themselves. 'Women,' she said, 'with talents not inferior, were allowed no stage for display, while men had such a reach for their exertions, such a compass for exercising their genius, such a range for obtaining distinction, that they were at once the objects of her envy for the means they possessed, and of her pity for turning them to no better account. There were indeed,' she added, 'a few men who redeemed the credit of the rest, and for their sakes she gloried, since she could not be of their sex, that she was at least of their species.'

'I know, Madam,' said Mr. Stanley, 'your admiration of heroic qualities and manly virtues—courage for instance. But there are still nobler ways of exercising courage than even in the field of battle. There are more exalted means of showing spirit than by sending or accepting a challenge. To sustain a fit of sickness may exhibit as true heroism as to lead an army. To bear a deep affliction well calls for as high exertion of soul as to storm a town and to meet death with Christian resolution is an act of courage, in which many a woman has triumphed, and many a philosopher, and even some generals, have failed.

I thought I saw in Miss Sparkes's countenance a kind of civil contempt, as if she would be glad to exchange the patient sickness and heroic death-bed for the renown of victory and the glory of a battle: and I suspected that she envied the fame of the challenge, and the spirit of the duel more than those meek and passive virtues which we all agreed were peculiarly Christian, and peculiarly feminine.

CHAP. XXXVII.

In the afternoon, when the company were assembled in the drawing room, the conversation turned on various subjects. Mr. Flam, feeling as if he had not sufficiently produced himself at dinner, now took the lead. He was never solicitous to show what he called his learning, but when Miss Sparkes was present, whom it was his grand delight to *set down* as he called it. Then he never failed to give broad hints that if he was now no great student, it was not from ignorance, but from the pressure of more indispensable avocations.

He first rambled into some desultory remarks on the absurdity of the world, and the preposterousness of modern usages, which perverted the ends of education, and exalted things which were of least use into most importance.

'You seem out of humour with the world, Mr. Flam,' said Mr. Stanley. 'I hate the world,' returned he. 'It is indeed,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'a scene of much danger, because of much evil.'

I don't value the danger a straw,' rejoined Mr. Flam; 'and as to the evil, I hope I have sense enough to avoid that: but I hate it for its folly, and despise it for its inconsistency.'

'In what particulars, Mr. Flam?' said Sir John Belfield.

'In every thing,' replied he. 'In the first place, don't people educate their daughters entirely for holidays, and then wonder that they are of no use? Don't they charge them to be

modest, and teach them every thing that can make them bold? Are we not angry that they don't attend to great concerns, after having instructed them to take the most pains for the least things! There is my Fan now,—they tell me she can dance as well as a posture mistress, but she slouches in her walk like a milk maid. Now as she seldom dances, and is always walking, would it not be more rational to teach her to do that best which she is to do oftenest? She sings like a Syren, but 'tis only to strangers. I who paid for it, never heard her voice. She is, always warbling in a distant room, or in every room where there is company; but if I have the gout and want to be amused, she is as dumb as a dormouse.'

'So much for the errors in educating our daughters,' said Sir John, 'now for the sons.'

'As to our boys,' returned Mr. Flam, 'don't we educate them in one religion, and then expect them to practise another? Don't we cram them with books of heathen philosophy, and then bid them go and be good Christians? Don't we teach them to admire the heroes and gods of the old poets, when there is hardly one hero, and certainly not one god, who would not in this country have been tried at the Old Bailey, if not executed at Tyburn? And as to the goddesses, if they had been brought before us on the bench, brother Stanley, there is scarcely one of them but we should have ordered to the house of correction. The queen of them, indeed, I should have sent to the ducking stool for a scold.

'Then again don't we tell our sons, when men, that they must admire a monarchical government, after every pains have been taken, when they were boys, to fill them with raptures for the ancient republics?'

'Surely, Mr. Flam,' said Sir John, 'the ancient forms of government may be studied with advantage, were it only to show us by contrast the superior excellence of our own.'

'We might,' said Miss Sparkes, in a supercilious accent, 'learn some things from them which we much want. You have been speaking of economy. These republicans whom Mr. Flam is pleased to treat with so much contempt, he must allow, had some good, clever contrivance to keep down the taxes, which it would do us no harm to imitate. Victories were much better bargains to them than they are to us. A few laurel leaves or a sprig of oak was not quite so dear a pension.'

'But you will allow, Madam,' said Sir John, smiling, 'that a triumph was a more expensive reward than a title.'

Before she had time to answer, Mr. Flam said, 'let me tell you, Miss Sparkes, that as to triumphs, our heroes are so used to them at sea, that they would laugh at them at home. Those who obtain triumphs as often as they meet their enemies, would despise such holiday play among their friends. We don't to be sure, reward them as your ancients did. We don't banish them, nor put them to death for saving their country like your Athenians. We don't pay them with a trumpery wreath like your Romans. We Englishmen don't put our conquerors off with leaves; we give them fruits, as cheerfully bestowed as they are fairly earned. God bless them! I would reduce my table to one dish, my hall to one servant, my stable to one saddle-horse, and my kennel to one pointer, rather than to abridge the preservers of Old England of a feather.'

'Signal exploits, if nationally beneficial,' said Sir John, 'deserve substantial remuneration; and I am inclined to think that public honours are valuable, not only as rewards but incitements. They are as politic as they are just. When Miltiades and his illustrious ten thousand gained their immortal victory, would not a Blenheim erected on the plains of Marathon, have stimulated unborn soldiers, more than the little transitory columns which barely recorded the names of the victors?'

'What warrior,' said Mr. Carlton, 'will hereafter visit the future Palace of Trafalgar without reverence? A reverence, the purity of which will be in no degree impaired by contemplating such an additional motive to emulation.'

In answer to some further observations of Miss Sparkes, on the superiority of the ancient to British patriotism, Mr. Flam, whose indignation now provoked him to display his whole stock of erudition, eagerly exclaimed—'Do you call that patriotism in your favourite Athenians, to be so fond of rare shows, as not only to devote the money of the state to the play-house, but to make it capital to divert a little of it to the wants of the gallant soldiers, who were fighting their battles? I hate to hear fellows called patriots, who preferred their diversions to their country.'

Then erecting himself, as if he felt the taller for being an Englishman, he added,—'What, Madam Sparkes, would your Greeks have said to a Patriotic Fund by private contribution, of near half a million, in the midst of heavy taxes and a tedious war, voluntarily raised and cheerfully given to the orphans, widows, and mothers of their brave countrymen, who fell in their defence? Were the poor soldiers who fought under your Cimons, and your ——, I forget their names, ever so kindly remembered? Make it out that they were—shew me such a spirit among your ancients, and I'll turn republican to-morrow.

Miss Sparkes having again said something which he thought tended to exalt the ancient states at the expense of our own country, Mr. Flam indignantly replied—'Tell me, Madam, did your Athens, or your Sparta, or your Rome, ever take in seven thousand starving priests, driven from a country with which they were at war; a country they had reason to hate, of a religion they detested? Did they ever receive them I say, maintain them like gentlemen; and caress them like friends? If you can bring me one such instance, I will give up Old England, and turn Greek, or Roman, or—any thing but Frenchman.'

'I should be inclined,' said Mr. Stanley, 'to set down that noble deed to the account of our national religion, as well as of our national generosity.'

Miss Sparkes said, 'in one respect, however, Mr. Flam imitates the French whom he is abusing. He is very apt to triumph where he has gained no victory. If you hear his account of a defeat, you would take it like theirs for a con-

quest.' She added, however, 'that there were illustrious men in other countries besides his own, as their successes testified. For her part, she was a citizen of the world, and honoured heroes wherever they were found, in Macedon, in Sweden, or even in France.'

'True enough,' rejoined Mr. Flam, 'the rulers of other countries have gone about and delivered kingdoms as we are doing: but there is this difference: they free them from mild masters to make them their own slaves; we neither get them for ourselves or our minions, our brothers, or cousins, our Jeromes or Josephs. *We* raise the weak, *they* pull down the prosperous. If *we* redeem kingdoms, 'tis to bestow them on their own lawful kings. If we help this nation, 'tis to recal one sovereign from banishment; if we assist that, 'tis to deliver another from captivity.'

'What a scene for Spain,' said Sir John, 'to behold in us their own national Quixotism soberly exemplified and rationally realized! The generous theory of their romantic knight-errant brought into actual practice. The fervour without the absurdity; the sound principle of justice without the extravagance of fancy! Wrongs redressed and rights restored, and upon the grandest scale! Deliverance wrought, not for imaginary princes, but for deposed and imprisoned monarchs! Injuries avenged—not the ideal injuries of ridiculous individuals, but the substantial wrongs of plundered empires!'

Sir John, who was amused with the oddities of Mr. Flam, was desirous of still provoking him to talk; much effort indeed was not required to induce him to do what he was fond of doing, whenever there was an opportunity of contradicting Miss Sparkes.

'But, Mr. Flam,' said Sir John, 'you were interrupted as you began to enumerate the inconsistencies which you said had put you out of love with the world.'

'Why, it makes me mad,' replied he, 'to hear men who make the loudest outcry about the dangers of the state, cramming their houses with French governesses, French cooks, and French valets; is not this adding flame to the fire? Then I have no patience to see people who pretend great zeal for the church, delighted that an Italian singer should have a larger revenue than the highest of our own bishops. Such patriots might have done well enough for Athenians,' added he, looking insultingly at Miss Sparkes, 'but they make miserable Englishmen. Then I hate to see fellows who pay least taxes, complaining most of the burthen—those who most lament the hardness of the times, spending money in needless extravagance, and luxury increasing in exact proportion as means diminish.

'Then I am sick of the conceit of the boys and girls. Do but observe how their vanity imposes on their understanding, and how names disguise things. My son would start if I were to desire him to go to London in the *stage coach*, but he *puts himself into the mail* with great coolness. If I were to talk to Fan about living in a *small house*, she would not give me the hearing, whereas she is quite wild to live in a *cottage*.'

'I do not quite agree with you, Mr. Flam,' said Sir John, smiling, 'as to the inconsistency of the world, I rather lament its dull uniformity. If we may rely on those living chronicles, the newspapers, all is one faultless scene of monotonous perfection.—Were it otherwise, I presume, those frugal philologers would not keep a set of phrases ready cut and dried, in order to apply them universally in all cases. For instance, is not every public place from St. James to Otaheite, or the Cape, invariably *crowded with beauty and fashion*? Is not every public sermon pronounced to be excellent? Is not every civic speech, every provincial harangue *neat and appropriate*? And is not every military corps, from the veteran regiment of regulars, to the volunteer company of a month's standing, always declared to be *in the highest state of discipline*?'

Before the company went away, I observed that Mrs. Carlton gave Lucilla a significant glance, and both withdrew together.—In spite of my thorough belief of the injustice and absurdity of my suspicion, a pang darted through my heart, at the bare possibility that Lord Staunton might be the subject of this secret conference. I was perfectly assured that Miss Stanley would never accept him, while he retained his present character; but that character might be improved. She had rejected him for his principles; if these principles were changed, there was no other reasonable ground of objection. He might be reformed. Dare I own, even to myself, that I dreaded to hear of his reformation. I hated myself for the thought. I will, said I faintly, endeavour to rejoice if it be so. I felt a conflict in my mind between my principles and my passion, that distressed me not a little. My integrity had never before been so assailed.

At length they returned. I earnestly examined their countenances. Both looked cheerful, and even animated; yet it was evident from the redness of their eyes that both of them had been weeping. The company immediately took their leave; all our party, as it was a fine evening, attended them out to their carriages, except Miss Stanley, she only pressed the hand of Mrs. Carlton, smiled, and looked as if she durst not trust herself to talk to her, withdrew to the bow window from whence she could see them depart. I remained in the room.

As she was wiping her eyes to take away the redness, which was a sure way to increase it, I ventured to join her, and inquired with an interest I could not conceal, what had happened to distress her. 'These are not tears of distress,' said she, sweetly smiling. 'I am quite ashamed that I have so little self-controul; but Mrs. Carlton has given me so much pleasure! I have caught the infection of her joy, though my foolish sympathy looks more like sorrow.' Surely, said I, indignantly to myself, she will not own Staunton's love to my face?

All frank and open as Miss Stanley was, I was afraid to press her. I had not courage to ask what I longed to know. Though Lord Staunton's renewed addresses might not give them so much pleasure, yet his reformation I knew would. I now looked so earnestly inquisitive at Lucilla, that she said, 'Oh he is all we could wish. He is a thoroughly converted man!

Indignation and astonishment made me speechless. Is this the modest Lucilla, said I to myself? It is all over. She loves him to distraction. As I attempted not to speak, she at length said, 'My poor friend is at last quite happy. I know you will rejoice with us. Mr. Carlton has for some time regularly read the Bible with her. He condescends to hear, and to invite her remarks, telling her that if he is the better classic, she is the better Christian, and that their assistance in the things which each understands must be reciprocal. If he is her teacher in human literature, he says, she must be his in that which is divine. He has been very earnest to get his mind imbued with scriptural knowledge.' How inexpressible was now my joy! As I was still silent she went on. 'But this is not all. Last Saturday he said to her, 'Henrietta, I have but one complaint to make of you; and it is for a fault which I always thought would be the last I should ever have to charge you with. It is selfishness.' Mrs. Carlton was a little shocked, though the tenderness of his manner mitigated her alarm, 'Henrietta,' resumed he, 'you intend to go to Heaven without your husband. I know you always retire to your dressing-room, not only for your private devotions, but to read prayers to your maids. What have your men-servants done, what has your husband done, that they should be excluded? Is it not a little selfish, my Henrietta,' added he, smiling, 'to confine your zeal to the eternal happiness of your own sex? Will you allow me and my men-servants to join you? Tomorrow is Sunday; we will then, if you please, begin in the hall. You shall prepare what you would have read; and I will be your chaplain. A most unworthy one, Henrietta, I confess; but you will not only have a chaplain of your own making, but a Christian also. Yes, my angelic wife, I am a Christian upon the truest, the deepest conviction.'

"'Never, my dear Lucilla,' continued Mrs. Carlton, 'did I know what true happiness was till that moment. My husband, with all his faults, had always been remarkably sincere. Indeed his aversion to hypocrisy had made him keep back his right feelings and sentiments, till he was assured they were well established in his mind. He has for some time been regular at church, a thing, he said, too much taken up as a customary form to be remarkable, and which therefore involved not much; but family prayer adopted from conviction of its being a duty, rather pledged a man to consistent religion. Never, I hope, shall I forget the joy I felt, nor my gratitude to that Being 'from whom all holy desires proceed,' when, with all his family kneeling solemnly around him, I heard my once unhappy husband with a sober fervour begin,

"'To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him, neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us.'

'He evidently struggled with his own feelings; but his manly mind carried him through it with an admirable mixture of dignity and feeling. He was so serenely cheerful the rest of the evening, that I felt he had obtained a great victory over himself, and his heart was at peace with him. Prayer with him was not a beginning form, but a consummation of his better purposes.'"

The sweet girl could not forbear weeping again, while she was giving me this interesting account. I felt as if I had never loved her till then. To see her so full of sensibility, without the slightest tincture of romance, so feeling, yet so sober-minded, enchanted me. I could now afford to wish heartily for Lord Staunton's reformation, because it was not likely to interfere with my hopes. And now the danger was over, I even endeavoured to make myself believe that I *should* have wished it in any event; so treacherous will the human heart be found by those who watch its motions. And it proceeds from not watching them, that the generality are so little acquainted with the evils which lurk within it.

Before I had time to express half what I felt to the fair narrator, the party came in. They seemed as much puzzled at the position in which they found Lucilla and myself, she wiping her eyes, and I standing by in admiration, as I had been at her mysterious interview with Mrs. Carlton. The Belfields knew not what to make of it. The mother's looks expressed astonishment and anxiety. The father's eye demanded an explanation. All this mute eloquence passed in an instant, Miss Stanley gave them not time to inquire. She flew to her mother, and eagerly repeated the little tale which furnished matter for grateful joy and improving conversation the rest of the evening.

Mr. Stanley expressed a thorough confidence in the sincerity of Carlton. 'He had always,' continued he, 'in his worst days an abhorrence of deceit, and such a dread of people appearing better than they are, that he even commended that most absurd practice of Dean Swift, who you know used to perform family prayer in a garret, for fear any one should call in and detect him in the performance.' Carlton defended this as an honourable instance of Swift's abhorrence of ostentation in his religion. I opposed it on the more probable ground of his being ashamed of it. For allowing, what however never can be allowed, that an ordinary man might have some excuse for the dread of being sneered at, as wanting to be thought righteous overmuch; yet in a churchman, in a dignified churchman, family prayer would be expected as a customary decency, an indispensable appendage to his situation; which though it might be practised without piety, could not be omitted without disgrace, and which even a sensible infidel, considering it merely as a professional act could not say was a custom

More honoured in the breach than the observance.

—

CHAP. XXXVIII

One evening, which Mr. Tyrrel happened to spend with us, after Mr. Stanley had performed the family devotions, Mr. Tyrrel said to him, 'Stanley, I don't much like the prayer you read.

It seems, by the great stress it lays on holiness, to imply that a man has something in his own power. You did indeed mention the necessity of faith, and the power of grace; but there was too much about making the life holy, as if that were all in all. You seem to be putting us so much upon working and doing, that you leave nothing to do for the Saviour.'

'I wish,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'as I am no deep theologian, that you had started this objection before Dr. Barlow went away, for I know no man more able or more willing for serious discussion.'

'No,' replied Tyrrel, 'I see clearly by some things which he dropt in conversation, as well as by the whole tenor of his sermons, that Barlow and I should never agree. He means well, but knows little. He sees something, but feels nothing. More argument than unction. Too much reasoning, and too little religion; a little light, and no heat. He seems to me so to 'overload the ship with duties,' that it will sink by the means he takes to keep it afloat. I thank God my own eyes are opened, and I at last feel comfortable in my mind.'

'Religious comfort,' said Mr. Stanley, 'is a high attainment. Only it is incumbent on every Christian to be assured that if he is happy it is on safe grounds.'

'I have taken care of that,' replied Mr. Tyrrel. 'For some years after I had quitted my loose habits, I attended occasionally at church, but found no comfort in it, because I perceived so much was to be *done*, and so much was to be *sacrificed*. But the great doctrines of faith, as opened to me by Mr. *H—n*, have at last given me peace and liberty, and I rest myself without solicitude on the mercy so freely offered in the Gospel. No mistakes or sins of mine can ever make me forfeit the divine favour.'

'Let us hear, however,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'what the Bible says; for as that is the only rule by which we shall be judged hereafter, it may be prudent to be guided by it here. God says by the prophet, 'I will put my Spirit within you:' but he does this for some purpose; for he says, in the very next words, 'I will cause you to *walk* in my statutes.' And for fear this should not plainly enough inculcate holiness, he goes on to say, 'And ye shall *keep* my judgments, and *do* them.' Show me, if you can, a single promise made to an impenitent, unholy man.'

Tyrrel. 'Why is not the mercy of God promised to the wicked in every part of the Bible?'

Stanley. 'It is. But that is, 'if he forsake his way.'

Tyrrel. 'This fondness for works is, in my opinion, nothing else but setting aside the free grace of God.'

Stanley. 'Quite the contrary: so far from setting aside, it is the way to glorify it, for it is by that grace alone that we are enabled to perform right actions. For myself, I always find it difficult to answer persons, who, in flying to one extreme, think they cannot too much degrade the opposite. If we give faith its due prominence, the mere moralist reprobates our principles, as if we were depreciating works. If we magnify the beauty of holiness, the advocate for exclusive faith accuses us of being its enemy.'

Tyrrel. 'For my own part, I am persuaded that unqualified trust is the only ground of safety.'

Stanley. 'He who cannot lie has indeed told us so. But trust in God is humble dependence, not presumptuous security. The Bible does not say trust in the Lord and sin on, but, 'trust in the Lord, and be doing good.' We are elsewhere told that, 'God works in us to will and to do.' There is no getting over that little word *to do*. I suppose you allow the necessity of prayer.'

Tyrrel. 'Certainly I do.'

Stanley. 'But there are conditions to our prayers also, 'if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.''

Tyrrel. 'The scriptures affirm that we must live on the promises.'

Stanley. 'They are indeed the very aliment of the Christian life. But what are the promises?'

Tyrrel. 'Free pardon and eternal life to them that are in Christ Jesus.'

Stanley. 'True. But who are they that *are* in Christ Jesus! The Apostle tells us, 'they who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.' Besides, is not holiness promised as well as pardon? 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.'

Tyrrel. 'Surely, Stanley, you abuse the grace of the Gospel, by pretending that man is saved by his own righteousness.

Stanley. 'No, no, my dear Tyrrel, it is you who abuse it, by making God's mercy set aside man's duty. Allow me to observe, that he who exalts the grace of God, with a view to indulge himself in any sin, is deceiving no one but himself; and he who trusts in Christ, with a view to spare himself the necessity of watchfulness, humility, and self-denial, that man depends upon Christ for more than he has promised.'

Tyrrel. 'Well, Mr. Stanley, it appears to me that you want to patch up a convenient accommodating religion, as if Christ were to do a little, and we were to do the rest: a sort of partnership salvation, and in which man has the largest share.'

Stanley. 'This, I fear, is indeed the dangerous creed of many worldly Christians.—No, God may be said to do all, because he gives power for all, strength for all, grace for all. But this grace is a principle, a vital energy, a life-giving spirit to quicken us, to make us abound in holiness. He does not make his grace abound, that we may securely live in sin, but that we may subdue it, renounce it, live above it.'

Tyrrel. 'When our Saviour was upon earth, there was no one quality he so uniformly commended, in those who came to be healed by him, as faith.'

Stanley. 'It is most true. But we do not meet in any of them with such a presumptuous faith, as led them to rush into diseases on purpose to show their confidence in his power of healing them, neither are we to 'continue in sin that grace may abound.'—You cannot but observe, that the faith of the persons you mention, was always accompanied with an earnest desire to get rid of their diseases. And it is worth re-

marking, that to the words 'thy faith has made thee whole,' is added '*sin no more*,' lest a worse thing come unto thee.'

Tyrrel. 'You cannot persuade me that any neglect, or even sin of mine, can make void the covenant of God.'

Stanley. 'Nothing can set aside the covenant of God, which is sure and steadfast.—But as for him who lives in the allowed practice of any sin, it is clear that he has no part nor lot in the matter. It is clear that he is not one of those whom God has taken into the covenant. That God will keep his word is most certain, but such a one does not appear to be the person to whom that word is addressed. God as much designed that you should apply the faculties, the power, and the will he has given you, to a life of holiness, as he meant when he gave you legs, hands, and eyes, that you should walk, work, and see. His grace is not intended to exclude the use of his gifts, but to perfect, exalt, and ennoble them.'

Tyrrel. 'I can produce a multitude of texts to prove that Christ has done every thing, and of course has left nothing for me to do, but to believe on him.'

Stanley. 'Let us take the general tenor and spirit of scripture, and neither pack single texts together, detached from the connexion in which they stand; nor be so unreasonable as to squeeze all the doctrines of Christianity out of every single text, which perhaps was only meant to inculcate one individual principle. How consistently are the great leading doctrines of faith and holiness balanced and reconciled in every part of the Bible! If ever I had been in danger of resting on a mere dead faith, by one of those texts on which you exclusively build, in the very next sentence, perhaps, I am roused to active virtue, by some lively example, or absolute command. If again I am ever in danger, as you say, of sinking the ship with my proud duties, the next passage calls me to order, by some powerful injunction to renounce all confidence in my miserable defective virtues, and to put my whole trust in Christ. By thus assimilating the Creed with the Commandments, the Bible becomes its own interpreter, and perfect harmony is the result. Allow me also to remark, that this invariable rule of exhibiting the doctrines of Scripture in their due proportion, order, and relative connexion, is one of the leading excellences in the service of our Church. While no doctrine is neglected or undervalued, none is disproportionately magnified, at the expense of the others. There is neither omission, undue prominence, nor exaggeration. There is complete symmetry and correct proportion.

Tyrrel. 'I assert that we are freed by the Gospel from the condemnation of the law.'

Stanley. 'But where do you find that we are free from the obligation of obeying it? For my own part I do not combine the doctrine of grace to which I most cordially assent, with any doctrine which practically denies the voluntary agency of man. Nor, in my adoption of the belief of that voluntary agency, do I, in the remotest degree, presume to abridge the sovereignty of God. I adopt none of the metaphysical subtleties, none of the abstruse niceties of any party, nor do I imitate either in the reprobation of the other, firmly believing that heaven is peopled with the humble and the conscientious out of every class of real Christians.'

Tyrrel. 'Still I insist that if Christ has delivered me from sin, sin can do me no harm.'

Stanley. 'My dear Mr. Tyrrel, if the king of your country were a mighty general, and had delivered the land from some powerful enemy, would it show your sense of the obligation, or your allegiance as a subject, if you were to join the enemy he had defeated? By so doing, though the country might be saved, you would ruin yourself. Let us then live in confederacy with sin, the power of which indeed our Redeemer has broken, but both the power and guilt of which the individual is still at liberty to incur.'

Tyrrel. 'Stanley, I remember when you thought the Gospel was all in all.

Stanley. 'I think so still: but I am now, as I was then, for a sober consistent Gospel, a Christianity, which must evidence itself by its fruits. The first words of the Apostle after his conversion were, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' When he says, 'so run that ye may obtain,' he could never mean that we could obtain by sitting still, nor would he have talked of 'labouring *in vain*,' if he meant that we should not labour at all. We dare not persist in any thing that is wrong, or neglect any thing that is right, from an erroneous notion, that we have such an interest in Christ, as will excuse us from doing the one, or persisting in the other.'

Tyrrel. 'I fancy you think that a man's salvation depends on the number of good actions he can muster together.'

Stanley. 'No, it is the very spirit of Christianity not to build on this or that actual work, but sedulously to strive for that temper, and those dispositions, which are the seminal principle of all virtues; and where the heart struggles, and prays for the attainment of this state, though the man should be placed in such circumstances as to be able to do little to promote the welfare of mankind, or the glory of God, in the eyes of the world; this very habitual aim and bent of the mind, with humble sorrow at its low attainments, is, in my opinion, no slight degree of obedience.'

Tyrrel. 'But you will allow that the Scriptures affirm, that Christ is not only a sacrifice, but a refuge, a consolation, a rest.'

Stanley. 'Blessed be God, he is indeed all these. But he is a consolation only to the heavy laden, a refuge to those alone who forsake sin. The rest he promises is not a rest from labour, but a rest from evil. It is a rest from the drudgery of the world, but not from the service of God. It is not inactivity, but quietness of spirit; not sloth but peace. He draws men indeed from slavery to freedom, but not a freedom to do evil, or to do nothing. He makes his service easy, but not by lowering the rule of duty, not by adapting his commands to the corrupt inclinations of our nature. He communicates his grace, gives fresh and higher motives to obedience, and imparts peace and comfort, not by any abatement in his demands, but by this infusion of his own grace, and this communication of his own Spirit.'

Tyrrel. 'You are a strange fellow. Accord-

ing to you, we can neither be saved by good works, nor without them.'

Stanley. 'Come, Mr. Tyrrel, you are nearer the truth than you intended. We cannot be saved by the merit of our good works, without setting at nought the merits and death of Christ; and we cannot be saved without them, unless we set at nought God's holiness, and make him a favourer of sin. Now to this the doctrine of the atonement, properly understood, is most completely hostile. That this doctrine *favours* sin, is one of the false charges which worldly men bring against vital Christianity, because they do not understand the principle, nor inquire into the grounds on which it is adopted.'

Tyrrel. 'Still I think you limit the grace of God, as if people must be very good first, in order to deserve it, and then he will come and add his grace to their goodness. Whereas grace has been most conspicuous in the most notorious sinners.'

Stanley. 'I allow that the grace of God has never manifested itself more gloriously than in the conversion of notorious sinners. But it is worth remarking, that all such, with St. Paul at their head, have ever after been eminently more afraid than other men of falling again into sin; they have prayed with the greatest earnestness to be delivered from the power of it, and have continued to lament most deeply the remaining corruptions of their hearts.'

In the course of the conversation, Mr. Tyrrel said, 'he should be inclined to entertain doubts of that man's state, who could not give an accurate account of the time and the manner in which he was first awakened, and who had no sensible manifestation of the divine favour.'

'I believe,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'that my notions of the evidence of being in the favour of God differ materially from yours. If a man feel in himself a hatred of all sin, without sparing his favourite corruption; if he rest for salvation on the promise of the Gospel alone; if he maintain in his mind such a sense of the nearness and immeasurable importance of eternal things, as shall enable him to use temporal things with moderation, and anticipate their end without dismay; if he delight in the worship of God, is zealous for his service, making *his* glory the end and aim of all his actions; if he labour to fulfil his allotted duties conscientiously; if he love his fellow creatures as the children of the same common father, and partakers of the same common hope; if he feel the same compassion for the immortal interests, as for the worldly distresses of the unfortunate; forgiving others, as he hopes to be forgiven; if he endeavour according to his measure and ability, to diminish the vice and misery with which the world abounds, *that* man has a solid ground of peace and hope, though he may not have those sensible evidences which afford triumph, and exultation. In the mean while, the man of a heated imagination, who boasts of mysterious communications within, is perhaps exhibiting outwardly unfavourable marks of his real state, and holding out by his low practice, discouragements unfriendly to that religion of which he professes himself a shining instance.

'The sober Christian is as fully convinced, that only He who made the heart, can new make it, as the enthusiast. He is as fully persuaded that his natural dispositions cannot be changed, nor his affections purified, but by the agency of the Divine Spirit, as the fanatic. And though he presume not to limit omnipotence to a sudden or a gradual change, yet he does not think it necessary to ascertain the day, and the hour, and the moment, contented to be assured that whereas he was once blind he now sees. If he do not presume in his own case to fix the *chronology of conversion*, he is not less certain as to its effects. If he cannot enumerate dates, and recapitulate feelings, he can and does produce such evidences of his improvement, as virtuous habits, a devout temper, an humble and charitable spirit, 'repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;' and this gives an evidence less equivocal, as existing more in the heart than on the lips, and more in the life than in the discourse. Surely if a plant be flourishing, the branches green, and the fruit fair and abundant, we may venture to pronounce these to be indications of health and vigour, though we cannot ascertain the moment when the seed was sown, or the manner in which it sprung up.'

Sir John, who had been an attentive listener, but had not yet spoken a word, now said, smiling, 'Mr. Stanley, you steer most happily between the two extremes. This exclusive cry of grace in one party of religionists, which drives the opposite side into as unreasonable a clamour against it, reminds me of the Queen of Louis Quatorze. When the Jesuits who were of the court party, made so violent an outcry against the Jansenists, for no reason but because they had more piety than themselves. Her Majesty was so fearful of being thought to favour the oppressed side, that in the excess of her party zeal, she vehemently exclaimed, 'Oh fie upon grace! fie upon grace!'"

Mr. Stanley. 'Party violence thinks it can never recede far enough from the side it opposes.'

Tyrrel. 'But how then is our religion to be known, except by our making a profession of truths, which the irreligious are either ignorant of or oppose?'

Stanley. 'There is, as I have already observed, a more infallible criterion. It is best known by the effects it produces on the heart, and on the temper. A religion, which consists in opinions only, will not advance us in our progress to heaven; it is apt to inflate the mind with the pride of disputation; and victory is so commonly the object of debate, that eternity slides out of sight. The two cardinal points of our religion, justification and sanctification, are, if I may be allowed the term, correlatives; they imply a reciprocal relation, nor do I call that state Christianity, in which either is separately and exclusively maintained. The union of these manifests the dominion of religion in the heart, by increasing its humility, by purifying its affections, by setting it above the contamination of the maxims and habits of the world, by detaching it from the vanities of time, and elevating it to a desire for the riches of eternity.'

Tyrrel. 'All the exhortation to duties with

which so many sermons abound, are only an infringement on the liberty of a Christian. A true believer knows of no duty but faith, no rule but love.'

Stanley. 'Love is indeed the fountain and principle of all practical virtue. But love itself requires some regulation to direct its exertion; some law to guide its motions; some rule to prevent its aberrations; some guard to hinder that which is vigorous from becoming eccentric. With such a regulation, such a law, such a guard, the divine ethics of the gospel have furnished us. The word of God is as much our rule, as his Spirit is our guide, or his Son our 'way.' This unerring rule alone secures Christian liberty from disorder, from danger, from irregularity, from excess. Conformity to the precepts of the Redeemer is the most infallible proof of having an interest in his death.'

We afterwards insensibly slid into other subjects, when Mr. Tyrrel, like a combatant who thought himself victorious, seemed inclined to return to the charge. The love of money having been mentioned by Sir John with extreme severity, Mr. Tyrrel seemed to consider it as a venal failing, and said that both avarice and charity might be constitutional.'

'They may be so,' said Mr. Stanley, 'but Christianity, Sir, has a constitution of its own; a superinduced constitution. A real Christian 'confers not with flesh and blood,' with his *constitution*, whether he shall give or forbear to give, when it is a clear duty, and the will of God requires it. If we believe in the principles, we must adopt the conclusions. Religion is not an unproductive theory, nor charity an unnecessary, an incidental consequence, nor a contingent left to our choice.' You are a classic, Mr. Tyrrel, and cannot have forgotten that in your mythological poets, the three Pagan graces were always knit together hand in hand; the three Christian graces are equally inseparable, and the greatest of these is charity; that grand principle of love, of which alms-giving is only one branch.'

Mr. Tyrrel endeavoured to evade the subject, and seemed to intimate that true Christianity might be known without any such evidences as Mr. Stanley thought necessary. This led the latter to insist warmly on the vast stress which every part of Scripture laid on the duty of charity. Its doctrines,' said he, 'its precepts, its promises, and its examples all inculcate it.—'the new commandment' of John—'the pure and undefiled religion' of James—'Ye shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just' of Luke—the daily and hourly practice of Him, who not only taught to do good, but who 'went about doing it.'—'The store for a good foundation against the time to come' of Paul—nay, in the only full, solemn, and express representation of the last day, which the gospel exhibits, charity is not only brought forward as a predominant, a distinguishing feature of the righteous, but a specific recompense seems to be assigned to it, when practised on true Christian grounds. And it is not a little observable, that the only posthumous quotation from the sayings of our divine Saviour which the Scripture has recorded, is an encouragement to charity—'Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than receive.'

CHAP. XXXIX.

The next afternoon, when we were all conversing together, I asked Mr. Stanley what opinion he held on a subject which had lately been a good deal canvassed, the propriety of young ladies learning the dead languages; particularly the Latin. He was silent. Mrs. Stanley smiled. Phœbe laughed outright. Lucilla, who had nearly finished making tea, blushed excessively. Little Celia, who was sitting on my knee while I was teaching her to draw a bird, put an end to the difficulty, by looking up in my face and crying out—'Why, Sir, Lucilla reads Latin with Papa every morning.' I cast a timid eye on Miss Stanley, who, after putting the sugar into the cream pot, and the tea into the sugar basin, slid out of the room, beckoning Phœbe to follow her.

'Poor Lucilla,' said Mr. Stanley, 'I feel for her! Well, Sir,' continued he, 'you have discovered by external, what I trust would not have been found by internal evidence. Parents who are in high circumstances, yet from principle abridge their daughters of the pleasures of the dissipated part of the world, may be allowed to substitute other pleasures; and if the girl has a strong inquisitive mind, they may direct it to such pursuits as call for vigorous application, and the exercise of the mental powers.'

'How does that sweet girl manage,' said Lady Belfield, 'to be so utterly void of pretension? So much softness and so much usefulness, strip her of all the terrors of learning.'

'At first,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'I only meant to give Lucilla as much Latin as would teach her to grammatize her English, but her quickness in acquiring led me on, and I think I did right; for it is superficial knowledge that excites vanity. A learned language, which a discreet woman will never produce in company, is less likely to make her vain, than those acquirements which are always in exhibition. And after all, it is a hackneyed remark, that the best instructed girl will have less learning than a school-boy; and why should vanity operate in her case more than in his?'

'For this single reason, Sir,' said I, 'that every boy knows that which very few girls are taught. Suspect me not, however, of censuring a measure which I admire. I hope the example of your daughters will help to raise the tone of female education.'

'Softly, softly,' interrupted Mr. Stanley, 'retrench your plural number. It is only one girl out of six who has deviated from the beaten track. I do not expect many converts, to what I must rather call my practice in one instance, than my general opinion. I am so convinced of the prevailing prejudice, that the thing has never been named out of the family. If my gay neighbour Miss Rattle knew that Lucilla had learned Latin, she would instantly find out a few odd moments to add that language to her innumerable acquirements, because her mother can

afford to pay for it, and because Lady Di. Dash has never learnt it. I assure you, however,' (laughing as he spoke,) 'I never intend to smuggle my poor girl on any man, by concealing from him this unpopular attainment, any more than I would conceal any personal defect.'

'I will honestly confess,' said Sir John, who had not yet spoken, 'that had I been to judge the case *a priori*, had I met Miss Stanley under the terrifying persuasion that she was a scholar, I own I should have met her with a prejudice; I should have feared she might be forward in conversation, deficient in feminine manners, and destitute of domestic talents. But having had such a fair occasion of admiring her engaging modesty, her gentle and unassuming tone in society, and above all, having heard from Lady Belfield how eminently she excels in the true science of a lady, domestic knowledge, I cannot refuse her that additional regard, which this solid acquirement, so meekly borne, deserves. Nor, on reflection, do I see why we should be so forward to instruct a woman in the language spoken at Rome in its present degraded state, in which there are comparatively few authors to improve her, and yet be afraid that she should be acquainted with that which was its vernacular tongue, in its age of glory two thousand years ago, and which abounds with writers of supreme excellence.'

I was charmed at these concessions from Sir John, and exclaimed with a transport which I could not restrain: 'In our friends, even in our common acquaintance, do we not delight to associate with those whose pursuits have been similar to our own, and who have read the same books? How dull do we find it, when civility compels us to pass even a day with an illiterate man? Shall we not then delight in the kindred acquirements of a dearer friend? Shall we not rejoice in a companion who has drawn, though less copiously, perhaps, from the same rich sources with ourselves; who can relish the beauty we quote, and trace the allusion at which we hint? I do not mean that *learning* is absolutely necessary, but a man of taste who has an ignorant wife, cannot, in her company, think his own thoughts, nor speak his own language. His thoughts he will suppress; his language he will debase, the one from hopelessness, the other from compassion.—He must be continually lowering and diluting his meaning, in order to make himself intelligible. This he will do for the woman he loves, but in doing it he will not be happy. She who cannot be entertained by his conversation, will not be convinced by his reasoning; and at length he will find out that it is less trouble to lower his own standard to hers, than to exhaust himself in the vain attempt to raise hers to his own.'

'A fine high sounding *tirade*, Charles, spoken *con amore*,' said Sir John. 'I really believe though, that one reason why women are so frivolous is that the things they are taught are not solid enough to fix the attention, exercise the intellect, and fortify the understanding. They learn little that inures to reasoning, or compels to patient meditation.'

'I consider the difficulties of a solid education,' said Mr. Stanley, 'as a sort of preliminary course, intended perhaps by Providence as a gradual preparative for the subsequent difficulties of life; as a prelude to the acquisition of that solidity and firmness of character which actual trials are hereafter to confirm. Though I would not make instruction unnecessarily harsh and rugged, yet I would not wish to increase its facilities to such a degree as to weaken that robustness of mind which it should be its object to promote, in order to render mental discipline subservient to moral.'

'How have you managed with your other girls, Stanley,' said Sir John, 'for though you vindicate general knowledge, you profess not to wish for general learning in the sex.'

'Far from it,' replied Mr. Stanley. 'I am a gardener you know, and accustomed to study the genius of the soil before I plant. Most of my daughters, like the daughters of other men, have some one talent, or at least propensity; for parents are too apt to mistake inclination for genius. This propensity I endeavour to find out, and to cultivate. But if I find the natural bias very strong, and not very safe, I then labour to counteract, instead of encouraging the tendency, and try to give it a fresh direction. Lucilla having a strong bent to whatever relates to intellectual taste, I have read over with her the most unexceptionable parts of a few of the best Roman classics. She began at nine years old, for I have remarked that it is not learning much, but learning late which makes pedants.

'Phœbe, who has a superabundance of vivacity, I have in some measure tamed, by not only making her a complete mistress of arithmetic, but by giving her a tincture of mathematics. Nothing puts such a bridle on the fancy as demonstration. A habit of computing steadies the mind, and subdues the soarings of imagination. It sobers the vagaries of trope and figure, substitutes truth for metaphor, and exactness for amplification. This girl, who if she had been fed on poetry and works of imagination, might have become a Miss Sparkes, now rather gives herself the airs of a calculator and of a grave computist. Though, as in the case of the cat in the fable, who was metamorphosed into a lady, nature will break out as soon as the scratching of a mouse is heard; and all Phœbe's philosophy can scarcely keep her in order, if any work of fancy comes in her way.

'To soften the horrors of her fate, however, I allowed her to read a few of the best things in her favourite class. When I read to her the more delicate parts of Gulliver's Travels, with which she was enchanted, she affected to be angry at the voyage to Laputa, because it ridicules philosophical science. And in Brobdignag, she said the proportions were not correct. I must however explain to you, that the use which I made of these dry studies with Phœbe, was precisely the same which the ingenious Mr. Cheshire makes of his steel machines for defective shapes, to straighten a crooked tendency or strengthen a weak one. Having employed these means to set her mind upright, and to cure a wrong bias, as that skilful gentleman discards his apparatus as soon as the patient becomes straight, so have I discontinued these pursuits, for I never meant to make a mathematical lady.

Jane has a fine ear and a pretty voice, and will sing and play well enough for any girl who is not to make music her profession. One or two of the others sing agreeably.

The little one, who brought the last nosegay, has a strong turn for natural history, and we all of us generally botanize a little of an evening, which gives a fresh interest to our walks. She will soon draw plants and flowers pretty accurately. Louisa also has some taste in designing, and takes tolerable sketches from nature. These we encourage because they are solitary pleasures, and want no witnesses. They all are too eager to impart somewhat of what they know to your little favourite Celia, who is in danger of picking up a little of every thing, the sure way to excel in nothing.

'Thus each girl is furnished with some one source of independent amusement. But what would become of them, or rather what would become of their mother and me, if every one of them was a scholar, a mathematician, a singer, a performer, a botanist, a painter? Did we attempt to force all these acquirements and a dozen more on every girl, all her *time* would be occupied about things which will be of no value to her in *eternity*. I need not tell you that we are carefully communicating to every one of them that general knowledge which should be common to all gentlewomen.

'In unrolling the vast volume of ancient and modern history, I ground on it some of my most useful instructions, and point out how the truth of Scripture is illustrated by the crimes and corruptions which history records, and that the same pride, covetousness, ambition, turbulence, and deceit, bring misery on empires, and destroy the peace of families. To history, geography, and chronology are such indispensable appendages, that it would be superfluous to insist on their usefulness. As to astronomy, while 'the heavens declare the glory of God,' it seems a kind of impiety not to give young people some insight into it.

'I hope,' said Sir John, 'that you do not exclude the modern languages from your plan.' 'As to French,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'with that thorough inconsistency which is common to man, the demand for it seems to have risen in exact proportion as it ought to have sunk.* I would not however rob my children of a language in which, though there are more books to be avoided, there are more that deserve to be read, than in all the foreign languages put together.'

'If you prohibit Italian,' said Sir John laughing, 'I will serve you as Cowper advised the boys and girls to serve Johnson for depreciating Henry and Emma; I will join the musical and poetical ladies in tearing you to pieces, as the Thracian damsels did Orpheus, and send your head with his

Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore.

'You remember me, my dear Belfield,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'a warm admirer of the exquisite beauties of Italian poetry. But a father feels, or rather judges differently from the mere man of taste, and as a father, I cannot help regretting, that what is commonly put into the hands of our daughters, is so amatory, that it has a tendency to soften those minds which rather want to be invigorated.

'There are few things I more deprecate for girls than a poetical education, the evils of which I saw sadly exemplified in a young friend of Mrs. Stanley. She had beauty and talents. Her parents, enchanted with both, left her entirely to her own guidance. She yielded herself up to the uncontrolled rovings of a vagrant fancy. When a child, she wrote verses, which were shown in her presence to every guest, their flattery completed her intoxication. She afterwards translated Italian sonnets, and composed elegies of which love was the only theme.—These she was encouraged by her mother to recite herself, in all companies, with a pathos and sensibility which delighted her parents, but alarmed her more prudent friends.

'She grew up with the confirmed opinion that the two great and sole concerns of human life were love and poetry. She considered them as inseparably connected, and she resolved in her own instance never to violate so indispensable a union. The object of her affection was unhappily chosen, and the effects of her attachment were such as might have been expected from a connection formed on so slight a foundation. In the perfections with which she invested her lover, she gave the reins to her imagination, when she thought she was only consulting her heart.—She picked out and put together all the fine qualities of all the heroes, of all the poets she had ever read, and into this finished creature, her fancy transformed her admirer.

'Love and poetry commonly influence the two sexes in a very disproportionate degree. With men, each of them is only one passion among many. Love has various and powerful competitors in hearts divided between ambition, business, and pleasure. Poetry is only one amusement in minds, distracted by a thousand tumultuous pursuits; whereas in girls of ardent tempers, whose feelings are not curbed by restraint, and regulated by religion, love is considered as the great business of their earthly existence. It is cherished, not as 'the cordial drop,' but as the whole contents of the cup; the remainder is considered only as froth or dregs. The unhappy victim not only submits to the destructive dominion of a despotic passion, but glories in it. So at least did this ill-starred girl.

'The sober duties of a family had early been transferred to her sisters, as far beneath the attention of so fine a genius; while she abandoned herself to studies, which kept her imagination in a fever, and to a passion which those studies continually fed and inflamed. Both together completed her delirium. She was ardent, generous, and sincere; but violent, imprudent, and vain to excess. She set the opinion of the world at complete defiance, and was not only to tally destitute of judgment and discretion herself, but despised them in others. Her lover and her muse were to her instead of the whole world.

'After having for some years exchanged son

* See an ingenious little treatise entitled Latium Redivivum, or the modern use of the Latin language, and the prevalence of the French.

nets under the names of Laura and Petrarch, and elegies under those of Sappho and Phaon; the lover, to whom all this had been mere sport, the gratification of vanity, and the recreation of an idle hour, grew weary.

Younger and fairer he another saw.

He drew off. Her verses were left unanswered, her reproaches unpitied. Laura wept, and Sappho raved in vain.

'The poor girl, to whom all this visionary romance had been a serious occupation, which had swallowed up cares and duties, now realized the woes she had so often admired and described. Her upbraidings only served to alienate still more the heart of her deserter; and her despair, which he had the cruelty to treat as fictitious, was to him a subject of mirth and ridicule. Her letters were exposed, her expostulatory verses read at clubs and taverns, and the unhappy Sappho was toasted in derision.

'All her ideal refinements now degenerated into practical improprieties. The public avowal of her passion drew on her from the world charges which she had not merited.—Her reputation was wounded, her health declined, her peace was destroyed. She experienced the dishonours of guilt without its turpitude, and in the bloom of life fell, the melancholy victim to a mistaken education, and an undisciplined mind.'

Mrs. Stanley dropped a silent tear to the memory of her unhappy friend, the energies of whose mind she said would, had they been rightly directed, have formed a fine character.

'But none of the things of which I have been speaking,' resumed Mr. Stanley, 'are the great and primary objects of instruction. The inculcation of fortitude, prudence, humility, temperance, self-denial—this is education. These are things which we endeavour to promote far more than arts or languages. These are tempers, the habit of which should be laid in early, and followed up constantly, as there is no day in life which will not call them into exercise; and how can that be practised which has never been acquired!

'Perseverance, meekness, and industry,' continued he, 'are the qualities we most carefully cherish and commend. For poor Laura's sake I make it a point never to extol any indications of genius. Genius has pleasure enough in its own high aspirings.—Nor am I indeed over much delighted with a great blossom of talents. I agree with good Bishop Hall, that it is better to thin the blossoms, that the rest may thrive; and that in encouraging too many propensities, one faculty may not starve another.'

Lady Belfield expressed herself grateful for the hints Mr. Stanley had thrown out, which could not but be of importance to her who had so large a family. After some further questions from her he proceeded.

'I have partly explained to you, my dear Madam, why, though I would not have every woman learn every thing, yet why I would give every girl, in a certain station of life, some one amusing accomplishment. There is here and there a strong mind, which requires a more substantial nourishment than the common education of girls affords. To such and to such only, would I furnish the quiet resource of a dead language, as a solid aliment which may fill the mind without inflating it.

'But that no acquirements may inflate it let me add, there is but one sure corrective. Against learning, against talents of any kind, nothing can steady the head, unless you fortify the heart with real Christianity. In raising the moral edifice, we must sink deep in proportion as we build high. We must widen the foundation if we extend the superstructure. Religion alone can counteract the aspirings of genius, can regulate the pride of talents.

'And let such women as are disposed to be vain of their comparatively petty attainments, look up with admiration to those two contemporary shining examples, the venerated Elizabeth Carter, and the blooming Elizabeth Smith. I knew them both, and to know was to revere them. In *them*, let our young ladies contemplate profound and various learning chastened by true Christian humility. In *them*, let them venerate acquirements which would have been distinguished in a university, meekly softened, and beautifully shaded by the gentle exertion of every domestic virtue, the unaffected exercise of every feminine employment.

CHAP. XL.

Ever since Mr. Tyrrel had been last with us, I had observed an unusual seriousness in the countenance of Sir John Belfield, though accompanied with his natural complacency. His mind seemed intent on something he wished to communicate. The first time we were both alone in the library with Mr. Stanley, Sir John said, 'Stanley, the conversations we have lately had, and especially the last with Tyrrel, in which you bore so considerable a part, have furnished me with agreeable matter for reflection. I hope the pleasure will not be quite destitute of profit.'

'My dear Sir John,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'in conversation with Mr. Tyrrel, I labour under a disadvantage common to every man, who when he is called to defend some important principle which he thinks attacked, or undervalued, is brought into danger of being suspected to undervalue others, which, if they in their turn were assailed, he would defend with equal zeal. When points of the last importance are slighted as insignificant, in order exclusively to magnify one darling opinion, I am driven to appear as if I opposed that important tenet, which, if I may so speak, seems pitted against the others. Those who do not previously know my principles, might almost suspect me of being an opposer of that prime doctrine, which I really consider as the leading principle of Christianity.'

'Allow me to say,' returned Sir John 'that my surprise has been equal to my satisfaction. Those very doctrines which you maintained, I had been assured, were the very tenets you rejected. Many of our acquaintance, who do not come near enough to judge, or who would not be competent to judge if they did, ascribe the stictness of your practice to some unfounded peculiarities of opinion, and suspect that the doctrines of Tyrrel, though somewhat modified,

a little more rationally conceived, and more ably expressed, are the doctrines held by you, and by every man who rises above the ordinary standard of what the world calls religious men. And what is a little absurd and inconsequent, they ascribe to these supposed dangerous doctrines, his abstinence, from the diversions, and his disapprobation of the manners and maxims of the world. *Your* opinions, however, I always suspected could not be very pernicious, the effects of which, from the whole tenor of your life, I knew to be so salutary.'

'My dear Belfield,' said Mr. Stanley 'men of the world are guilty of a striking inconsistency in the charge they bring against religious men. They accuse them at once of maintaining doctrines which lead to licentiousness, and of overstrictness in their practice. One of them may be true: but both cannot be so.'

'I now find upon full proof,' replied Sir John, 'that there is nothing in your sentiments but what a man of sense might approve; nothing but what, if he be really a man of sense, he will without scruple adopt. May I be enabled more fully, more practically to adopt them! You shall point out to me such a course of reading, as may not only clear up my remaining difficulties, but what is infinitely more momentous than the solution of any abstract question, may help to awaken me to a more deep and lively sense of my own individual interest in this great concern.'

Mr. Stanley's benevolent countenance was lighted up with more than its wonted animation. He did not attempt to conceal the deep satisfaction with which his heart was penetrated. He modestly referred his friend to Doctor Barlow, as a far more able casuist, though not a more cordial friend. For my own part, I felt my heart expand towards Sir John, with new sympathies and an enlarged affection. I felt nobler motives of attachment, an attachment which I hoped would be perpetuated beyond the narrow bounds of this perishable world.

'My dear Sir John,' said Mr. Stanley, 'it is among the daily but comparatively petty trials of every man, who is deeply in earnest to secure his immortal interests, to be classed with low and wild enthusiasts, whom his judgment condemns, with hypocrites against whom his principles revolt, and with men, pious and conscientious I am most willing to allow, but differing widely from his own views; with others who evince a want of charity in some points, and a want of judgment in most. To be identified, I say, with men so different from yourself, because you hold in common some great truths, which all real Christians have held in all ages, and because you agree with them in avoiding the blameable excesses of dissipation, is among the sacrifices of reputation which a man must be contented to make, who is earnest in the great object of a Christian's pursuit. I trust, however, that, through divine grace, I shall never renounce my integrity for the praise of men, who have so little consistency, that though they pretend their quarrel is with your faith, yet who would not care how extravagant your belief was, if your practice assimilated with their own. I trust, on the other hand, that I shall always maintain my candour towards those with whom we are unfairly involved; men, religious though somewhat eccentric; devout, though injudicious; and sincere, though mistaken; but who, with all their errors, against which I protest, and with all their indiscretion, which I lament, and with their ill-judged because irregular zeal, which I blame, I shall ever think—always excepting hypocrites and false pretenders—are better men, and in a safer state than their rivelers.'

'I have often suspected,' said I, 'that under the plausible pretence of objecting to your creed, men conceal their quarrel with the commandments.'

'My dear Stanley,' said Sir John, 'but for this visit I might have continued in the common error, that there was but one description of religious professors. That a fanatical spirit, and a fierce adoption of one or two particular doctrines, to the exclusion of all the rest, with a total indifference to morality, and a sovereign contempt of prudence, made up the character against which I confess, I entertained a serious disgust. Still, however, I loved *you* too well, and had too high an opinion of your understanding, to suspect that you would ever be drawn into those practical errors, to which I had been told, your theory inevitably led. Yet I own I had an aversion to this dreaded enthusiasm which drove me into the opposite extreme.

'How many men have I known,' replied Mr. Stanley, smiling, 'who, from their dread of a burning zeal, have taken refuge in a freezing indifference? As to the two extremes of heat and cold, neither of them is the true climate of Christianity; yet the fear of each drives men of opposite complexions into the other, instead of fixing them in the temperate zone which lies between them, and which is the region of genuine piety.

'The truth is, Sir John, *your* society considers earnestness in religion as the fever of a distempered understanding, while in inferior concerns they admire it as the indication of a powerful mind. Is zeal in politics accounted the mark of a vulgar intellect? Did they consider the unquenchable ardour of Pitt, did they regard the lofty enthusiasm of Fox, as evidences of a feeble or a disordered mind? Yet I will venture to assert, that ardour in religion is as much more noble than ardour in politics as the prize for which it contends is more exalted. It is beyond all comparison superior to the highest human interest, the truth and justice of which after all may possibly be mistaken, and the objects of which must infallibly have an end.'

Dr. Barlow came in, and seeing us earnestly engaged, desired that he might not interrupt the conversation. Sir John in a few words informed him of what had passed, and with a most graceful humility spoke of his own share in it, and confessed how much he had been carried away by the stream of popular prejudice, respecting men who had courage to make a consistent profession of Christianity. 'I now,' added he, 'begin to think with Addison, that singularity in religion is heroic bravery, 'because it only leaves the species by soaring above it.'

After some observations from Dr. Barlow, much in point, he went to remark that the difficulties of a clergyman were much increased

by the altered manners of the age. 'The tone of religious writing,' said he, 'but especially the tone of religious conversation, is much lowered. The language of a Christian minister in discussing Christian topics will naturally be consonant to that of Scripture. The Scripture speaks of a man being *renewed in the spirit of his mind*, of his being *sanctified by the grace of God*. Now how much circumlocution is necessary for us in conversing with a man of the world, to convey the sense without adopting the expression; and what pains must we take to make our meaning intelligible without giving disgust, and to be useful without causing irritation!'

Sir John. 'But, my good Doctor, is it not a little puritanical, to make use of such solemn expressions in company?'

Dr. Barlow. 'Sir, it is worse than puritanical, it is hypocritical, where the principle itself does not exist; and even where it does, it is highly inexpedient to introduce such phrases into general company at all. But I am speaking of serious private conversation, when, if a minister is really in earnest, there is nothing absurd in his prudent use of Scripture expressions. One great difficulty, and which obstructs the usefulness of a clergyman, in conversation with many persons of the higher class, who would be sorry not to be thought religious, is, that they keep up so little acquaintance with the Bible, that from their ignorance of its venerable phraseology, they are offended at the introduction of a text, not because it is Scripture; for that they maintain a kind of general reverence; but, because, from not reading it, they do not know that it *is* Scripture.

'I once lent a person of rank and talents an admirable sermon, written by one of our first divines. Though deeply pious, it was composed with uncommon spirit and elegance, and I thought it did not contain one phrase which could offend the most fastidious critic. When he returned it, he assured me that he liked it much on the whole, and should have approved it altogether, but for one methodistical expression. To my utter astonishment he pointed to the exceptionable passage, 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.' The chapter and verse not being mentioned, he never suspected it was a quotation from the Bible.'

'This is one among many reasons,' said Mr. Stanley, 'why I so strenuously insist that young persons should read the Scriptures, unaltered, unmodernized, unmutilated, unabridged. If parents do not make a point of this, the peculiarities of sacred language will become really obsolete to the next generation.'

In answer to some further remarks of Sir John, Mr. Stanley said, smiling, 'I have sometimes amused myself with making a collection of certain things, which are now considered and held up by a pretty large class of men as the infallible symptoms of methodism. Those which at present occur to my recollection are the following: Going to church in the afternoon, maintaining family prayer, not travelling, or giving great dinners or other entertainments on Sundays, rejoicing in the abolition of the slave trade, promoting the religious instruction of the poor at home, subscribing to the Bible Society, and contributing to establish Christianity abroad. These, though the man attend no eccentric clergyman, hold no one enthusiastic doctrine, associate with no fanatic, is sober in his conversation, consistent in his practice, correct in his whole deportment, will infallibly fix on him the charge of methodism. Any *one* of these will excite suspicion, but all united will not fail absolutely to stigmatize him. The most devoted attachment to the establishment will avail him nothing, if not accompanied with a fiery intolerance towards all who differ. Without intolerance, his charity is construed into unsoundness, and his candour into disaffection. He is accused of assimilating with the principles of every weak brother whom, though his judgment compels him to blame, his candour forbids him to calumniate. Saint and hypocrite are now, in the scoffer's lexicon, become convertible terms: the last being always implied where the first is sneeringly used.'

'It has often appeared to me,' said I, 'that the glory of a tried Christian somewhat resembles that of a Roman victor, in whose solemn procession, among the odes of gratulation, a mixture of abuse and railing made part of the triumph.'

'Happily,' resumed Mr. Stanley, 'a religious man knows the worst he is likely to suffer. In the present established state of things he is not called, as in the first ages of Christianity, to be made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. But he must submit to be assailed by three different descriptions of persons. From the first, he must be contented to have principles imputed to him which he abhors, motives which he disdains, and ends which he deprecates. He must submit to have the energies of his well-regulated piety confounded with the follies of the fanatic, and his temperate zeal blended with the ravings of the insane. He must submit to be involved in the absurdities of the extravagant, in the duplicity of the designing, and in the mischiefs of the dangerous; to be reckoned among the disturbers of that church which he would defend with his blood, and of that government which he is perhaps supporting in every possible direction. Every means is devised to shake his credit. From such determined assailants no prudence can protect his character, no private integrity can defend it, no public service rescue it.'

'I have often wondered,' said Sir John, 'at the success of attacks which seemed to have nothing but the badness of the cause to recommend them. But the assailant, whose object is to make good men ridiculous, well knows that he has secured to himself a large patronage in the hearts of all the envious, the malignant, and irreligious, who, like other levellers, find it more easy to establish the equality of mankind by abusing the lofty, than by elevating the low.'

'In my short experience of life,' said I, when Sir John had done speaking, 'I have often observed it as a hardship, that a man must only submit to be condemned for doctrines he disowns, but also for consequences which others may draw from the doctrines he maintains,

though he himself both practically and speculatively disavow any such consequences.'

'There is another class of enemies,' resumed Mr. Stanley. 'To do them justice, it is not so much the individual Christian, as Christianity itself, which *they* hope to discredit; *that* Christianity which would not only restrain the conduct, but would humble the heart; which strips them of the pride of philosophy, and the arrogant plea of merit; which would save, but will not flatter them. In this enlightened period, however, for men who would preserve any character, it would be too gross to attack religion itself, and they find they can wound her more deeply and more creditably through the sides of her professors.'

'I have observed,' said I, 'that the uncandid censurer always picks out the worst man of a class, and then confidently produces him as being a fair specimen of it.'

'From our own thoughtless, but less uncharitable acquaintance, the gay and the busy,' resumed Mr. Stanley, 'we have to sustain a gentler warfare. A little reproach, a good deal of ridicule, a little suspicion of our designs, and not a little compassion for our gloomy habits of life, and implied contempt of our judgment, some friendly hints that we carry things too far, an intimation that being righteous over much in the practice has a tendency to produce derangement in the faculties. These are the petty but daily trials of every man who is seriously in earnest; and petty indeed they are to him whose prospects are well grounded, and whose hope is full of immortality.'

'This hostility, which a real Christian is sure to experience,' said I, 'is not without its uses. It quickens his vigilance over his own heart, and enlarges his charity towards others, whom reproach perhaps may as unjustly stigmatize. It teaches him to be on his guard, lest he should really deserve the censure he incurs; and what I presume is of no small importance, it teaches him to sit loose to human opinion; it weakens his excessive tenderness for reputation, makes him more anxious to deserve, and less solicitous to obtain it.'

'It were well,' said Dr Barlow, 'if the evil ended here. The established Christian will evince himself to be such by not shrinking from the attack. But the misfortune is, that the dread of this attack keeps back well disposed but vacillating characters. They are intimidated at the idea of partaking the censure, though they know it to be false.

'When they hear the reputation of men of piety assailed, they assume an indifference which they are far from feeling. They listen to reproaches cast on characters which they inwardly revere, without daring to vindicate them. They hear the most attached subjects accused of disaffection, and the most sober-minded churchmen of innovation, without venturing to repel the charge, lest they should be suspected of leaning to the party. They are afraid fully to avow that their own principles are the same, lest they should be involved in the same calumny. To efface this suspicion, they affect a coldness which they do not feel, and treat with levity what they inwardly venerate. Very young men, from this criminal timidity, are led to risk their eternal happiness through the dread of a laugh. Though they know that they have not only religion but reason on their side, yet it requires a hardy virtue to repel a sneer, and an intrepid principle to confront a sarcasm. Thus their own mind loses its firmness, religion loses their support, the world loses the benefit which their example would afford, and they themselves become liable to the awful charge which is denounced against him who is ashamed of his Christian profession.'

'Men of the world,' said Sir John, 'are extremely jealous of whatever may be thought *particular;* they are frightened at every thing that has not the sanction of public opinion, and the stamp of public applause. They are impatient of the slightest suspicion of censure in what may be supposed to affect the credit of their judgment, though often indifferent enough as to any blame that may attach to their conduct. They have been accustomed to consider strict religion as a thing which militates against good taste, and to connect the idea of something unclassical and inelegant, something awkward and unpopular, something uncouth and ill-bred, with the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; doctrines which, though there is no harm in believing, they think there can be no good in avowing.

'It is a little hard,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that men of piety, who are allowed to possess good sense on all other occasions, and whose judgment is respected in all the ordinary concerns of life, should not have a little credit given to them in matters of religion, but that they should be at once transformed into idiots or madmen, in that very point which affords the noblest exercise to the human faculties.'

'A Christian then,' said I, 'if human applause be his idol, is of all men most miserable. He forfeits his reputation every way. He is accused by the men of the world of going too far; by the enthusiast of not going far enough. While it is one of the best evidences of his being right, that he is rejected by one party for excess, and by the other for deficiency.'

'What then is to be done?' said Dr. Barlow. 'Must a discreet and pious man give up a principle because it has been disfigured by the fanatic, or abused by the hypocrite, or denied by the sceptic, or reprobated by the formalist, or ridiculed by the men of the world? He should rather support it with an earnestness proportioned to its value; he should rescue it from the injuries it has sustained from its enemies; and the discredit brought on it by its imprudent friends. He should redeem it from the enthusiasm which misconceives, and from the ignorance or malignity which misrepresents it. If the learned and the judicious are silent in proportion as the illiterate and the vulgar are obtrusive and loquacious, the most important truths will be abandoned by those who are best able to unfold, and to defend them, while they will be embraced exclusively by those who misunderstand, degrade and debase them. Because the unlettered are absurd, must the able cease to be religious? If there is to be an abandonment of every Christian principle, because it has been unfairly, unskilfully, or inadequately treated, there would, one

by one, be an abandonment of every doctrine of the New Testament.'

'I felt myself bound,' said Mr. Stanley, 'to act on this principle in our late conversation with Mr. Tyrrel. I would not refuse to assert with him the doctrines of grace, but I endeavoured to let him see that I had adopted them in a scriptural sense. I would not try to convince him that he was wrong, by disowning a truth because he abused it. I would cordially reject all the bad use he makes of any opinion, without rejecting the opinion itself, if the Bible will bear me out in the belief of it. But I would scrupulously reject all the other opinions which he connects with it, and with which I am persuaded it has no connection.

'The nominal Christian,' said Dr. Barlow, 'who insists that religion resides in the understanding only, may contend that love to God, gratitude to our Redeemer, and sorrow for our offences, are enthusiastic extravagances; and effectually repress by ridicule and sarcasm, those feelings which the devout heart recognizes, and which Scripture sanctions. On the other hand, those very feelings are inflamed, exaggerated, distorted, and misrepresented, as including the whole of religion, by the intemperate enthusiast, who thinks reason has nothing to do in the business; but who, trusting to tests not warranted by Scripture, is governed by fancies, feelings, and visions of his own.

'Between these pernicious extremes, what course is the other Christian to pursue? Must he discard from his heart all pious affections because the fanatic abuses them, and the fastidious deny their existence? This would be like insisting, that because one man happens to be sick of a dead palsy, and another of a phrenzy fever, there is therefore in the human constitution no such temperate medium as sound health.'

CHAP. XLI.

Since the conversation which had accidentally led to the discovery of Miss Stanley's acquirements, I could not forbear surveying the perfect arrangements of the family, and the completely elegant but not luxurious table, with more than ordinary interest. I felt no small delight in reflecting that all this order and propriety were produced without the smallest deduction from the mental cultivation.

I could not refrain from mentioning this to Mrs. Stanley. She was not displeased with my observation, though she cautiously avoided saying any thing which might be construed into a wish to set off her daughter. As she seemed surprised at my knowledge of the large share her Lucilla had in the direction of the family concerns, I could not, in the imprudence of my satisfaction, conceal the conversation I had with my old friend Mrs. Comfit.

After this avowal she felt that any reserve on this point would look like affectation, a littleness which would have been unworthy of her character. 'I am frequently blamed by my friends,' said she, 'for taking some of the load from my own shoulders, and laying it on hers. 'Poor thing, she is too young!' is the constant cry of fashionable mothers. My general answer is, you do not think your daughters of the same age too young to be married, though you know marriage must bring with it these, and still heavier cares. Surely then Lucilla is not too young to be initiated in that useful knowledge which will hereafter become no inconsiderable part of her duty. The acquisition would be really burthensome then, if it were not lightened by preparatory practice now. I have, I trust, convinced my daughters, that though there is no great merit in possessing this sort of knowledge, yet to be destitute of it is highly discreditable.'

'In several houses where I had visited, I had observed the forwardness of the parents, the mother especially, to make a display of the daughter's merits,—'so dutiful! so notable! such an excellent nurse!' The girl was then called out to sing or to play, and was thus, by that *inconsistency* which my good mother deprecated, kept in the full exhibition of those very talents which are most likely to interfere with nursing and notableness. But since I had been on my present visit, I had never once heard my friends extol their Lucilla, or bring forward any of her excellences. I had however observed their eyes fill with delight, which they could not suppress, when her merits were the subject of the praise of others.

I took notice of this difference of conduct to Mrs. Stanley. 'I have often,' said she, 'been so much hurt at the indelicacy to which you allude, that I very early resolved to avoid it. If the girl in question does not deserve the commendation, it is not only disingenuous but dishonest. If she does, it is a coarse and not very honourable stratagem for getting her off. But if the daughter be indeed all that a mother's partial fondness believes,' added she, her eyes filling with tears of tenderness, 'how can she be in such haste to deprive herself of the solace of her life? How can she by gross acts wound that delicacy in her daughter, which, to a man of refinement, would be one of her chief attractions, and which will be lowered in his esteem, by the suspicion that she may concur in the indiscretion of the mother.

'As to Lucilla,' added she, 'Mr. Stanley and I sometimes say to each other, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols!' O my dear young friend! it is in vain to dissemble her unaffected worth and sweetness. She is not only our delightful companion, but our confidential friend. We encourage her to give us her opinion on matters of business, as well as of taste; and having reflected as well as read a good deal, she is not destitute of materials on which to exercise her reasoning powers. We have never repressed her natural vivacity, because we never saw it, like Phœbe's, in danger of carrying her off from the straight line.'

I thanked Mrs. Stanley for her affectionate frankness, with a warmth which showed the cordial interest I took in her, who was the object of it; company coming in interrupted our interesting tete-a-tete.

After tea, I observed the party in the saloon to be thinner than usual. Sir John and Lady

Belfield having withdrawn to write letters; and that individual having quitted the room, whose presence would have reconciled me to the absence of all the rest, I stole out to take a solitary walk. At the distance of a quarter of a mile from the park-gate, on a little common, I observed, for the first time, the smallest and neatest cottage I ever beheld. There was a flourishing young orchard behind it, and a little court full of flowers in front. But I was particularly attracted by a beautiful rose tree in full blossom which grew against the house, and almost covered the clean white walls. As I knew this sort of rose was a particular favourite of Lucilla's I opened the low wicket which led into the little court, and looked about for some living creature, of whom I might have begged the flowers. But seeing no one, I ventured to gather a bunch of the roses, and the door being open, walked into the house, in order to acknowledge my theft, and make my compensation. In vain I looked round the little neat kitchen! no one appeared.

I was just going out, when the sound of a soft female voice over head arrested my attention. Impelled by a curiosity which, considering the rank of the inhabitants, I did not feel it necessary to resist, I softly stole up the narrow stairs, cautiously stooping as I ascended, the lowness of the ceiling not allowing me to walk upright. I stood still at the door of a little chamber, which was left half open to admit the air. I gently put my head through. What were my emotions when I saw Lucilla Stanley kneeling by the side of a little clean bed, a large old Bible spread open on the bed before her, out of which she was reading one of the penitential Psalms to a pale emaciated female figure, who lifted up her failing eyes, and clasped her feeble hands in solemn attention!

Before two little bars, which served for a grate, knelt Phœbe, with one hand stirring some broth, which she had brought from home, and with the other fanning with her straw bonnet the dying embers, in order to make the broth boil; yet seemingly attentive to her sister's reading. Her dishevelled hair, the deep flush which the fire and her labour of love gave her naturally animated countenance, formed a fine contrast to the angelic tranquillity and calm devotion which sat on the face of Lucilla. Her voice was inexpressibly sweet and penetrating, while faith, hope and charity seemed to beam from her uplifted eyes. On account of the closeness of the room, she had thrown off her hat, cloak, and gloves, and laid them on the bed; and her fine hair, which escaped from its confinement, shaded that side of her face which was next the door, and prevented her seeing me.

I scarcely dared to breathe lest I should interrupt such a scene. It was a subject not unworthy of Raphael. She next began to read the forty-first Psalm, with the meek yet solemn emphasis of devout feeling. 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy, the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.' Neither the poor woman nor myself could hold out any longer. She was overcome by her gratitude, and I by my admiration, and we both at the same moment involuntarily exclaimed, Amen! I sprang forward with a motion which I could no longer control. Lucilla saw me, started up in confusion,

> and blush'd
> Celestial rosy red.

Then eagerly endeavouring to conceal the Bible, by drawing her hat over it, 'Phœbe,' said she, with all the composure she could assume, 'is the broth ready?' Phœbe, with her usual gaiety, called out to me to come and assist, which I did, but so unskilfully that she chid me for my awkwardness.

It was an interesting sight to see one of these blooming sisters lift the dying woman in her bed, and support her with her arm, while the other fed her, her own weak hand being unequal to the task. At that moment how little did the splendors and vanities of life appear in my eyes! and how ready was I to exclaim, with Wolsey,

> Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate you.

When they had finished their pious office, I inquired if the poor woman had no attendant. Phœbe who was generally the chief speaker, said, 'she has a good daughter, who is out at work by day, but takes care of her mother at night; but she is never left alone, for she has a little grand-daughter who attends her in the mean time; but as she is obliged to go once a day to the Grove to fetch provisions, we generally contrive to send her while we are here, that Dame Alice may never be left alone.'

While we were talking, I heard a little weary step, painfully climbing up the stairs, and looking round, expecting to see the grand-daughter; but it was little Kate Stanley, with a lap full of dry sticks, which she had been collecting for the poor woman's fire. The sharp points of the sticks had forced their way in many places through the white muslin frock, part of which, together with her bonnet, she had left in the hedge, which she had been robbing. At this loss she expressed not much concern, but lamented not a little that sticks were so scarce; that she feared the broth had been spoiled, from her being so long in picking them, but *indeed* she could not help it. I was pleased with these under allotments, these low degrees in the scale of charity.

I had gently laid my roses on the hat of Miss Stanley, as it lay on the Bible, and before we left the room, as I drew near the good old Dame to slip a couple of guineas into her hand, I had the pleasure of seeing Lucilla, who thought herself unobserved, retire to the little window, and fasten the roses into the crown of her hat like a garland. When the grand-daughter returned loaded with the daily bounty from the Grove, we took our leave, followed by the prayers and blessings of the good woman.

As we passed by the rose-tree, the orchard, and the court, Phœbe said to me, 'An't you glad that poor people can have such pleasures?' I told her it doubled my gratification to witness the enjoyment, and to trace the hand which conferred it; for she had owned it was *their* work. 'We have always,' replied Phœbe, 'a

particular satisfaction in observing a neat little flower garden about a cottage, because it holds out a comfortable indication that the inhabitants are free from absolute want, before they think of these little embellishments.'

'It looks also,' said Miss Stanley, 'as if the woman, instead of spending her few leisure moments in gadding abroad, employed them in adorning her little habitation, in order to make it more attractive to her husband. And we know more than one instance in this village in which the man has been led to give up the public house, by the innocent ambition of improving on her labours.'

I asked her what first inspired her with such fondness for gardening, and how she had acquired so much skill and taste in this elegant art? She blushed and said, 'she was afraid I should think her romantic, if she were to confess that she had caught both the taste and the passion, as far as she possessed either, from an early and intimate acquaintance with the Paradise Lost, of which she considered the beautiful descriptions of the scenery and plantations as the best precepts for landscape gardening. Milton,' she said, 'both excited the taste and supplied the rules. He taught the art and inspired the love of it.'

From the gardens of Paradise the transition to its heroine was easy and natural. On my asking her opinion of this portrait, as drawn by Milton, she replied, 'that she considered Eve, in her state of innocence, as the most beautiful model of the delicacy, propriety, grace and elegance of the female character which any poet ever exhibited. Even after her fall,' added she, 'there is something wonderfully touching in her remorse, and affecting in her contrition.'

'We are probably,' replied I, 'more deeply affected with the beautifully contrite expressions of repentance in our first parents, from being so deeply involved in the consequences of the offence which occasioned it.'

'And yet,' replied she, 'I am a little affronted with the poet, that while, with a noble justness, he represents Adam's grief at his expulsion, as chiefly arising from his being banished from the presence of his Maker, the sorrows of Eve seem too much to arise from being banished from her flowers. The grief, though never grief was so beautifully eloquent, is rather too exquisite, her substantial ground for lamentation considered.'

Seeing me going to speak, she stopped me with a smile, saying, 'I see by your looks that you are going, with Mr. Addison, to vindicate the poet, and to call this a just appropriation of the sentiment to the sex; but surely the disproportion in the feeling here is rather too violent, though I own the loss of her flowers *might* have aggravated any common privation. There is, however, no female character in the whole compass of poetry, in which I have ever taken so lively an interest, and no poem that ever took such powerful possession of my mind.'

If any thing had been wanting to my full assurance of the sympathy of our tastes and feelings, this would have completed my conviction. It struck me as the Virgilian lots formerly struck the superstitious. Our mutual admiration of the Paradise Lost, and of its heroine, seemed to bring us nearer together than we had yet been. Her remarks, which I gradually drew from her in the course of our walk, on the construction of the fable, the richness of the imagery, the elevation of the language, the sublimity and just appropriation of the sentiments, the artful structure of the verse and the variety of the characters, convinced me that she had imbibed her taste from the purest sources. It was easy to trace her knowledge of the best authors, though she quoted none.

'This,' said I exultingly to myself, 'is the true learning for a lady; a knowledge that is rather detected than displayed, that is felt in its effects on her mind and conversation; that is seen, not by her citing learned names, or adducing long quotations, but in the general result, by the delicacy of her taste, and the correctness of her sentiments.'

In our way home I made a merit with little Kate, not only by rescuing her hat from the hedge, but by making a little provision of wood under it, of larger sticks than she could gather, which she joyfully promised to assist the granddaughter in carrying to the cottage.

I ventured, with as much diffidence as if I had been soliciting a pension for myself, to entreat that I might be permitted to undertake the putting forward Dame Alice's little girl in the world, as soon as she shall be released from her attendance on her grandmother. My proposal was graciously accepted, on condition that it met with Mr. and Mrs. Stanley's approbation.

When we joined the party at supper, it was delightful to observe that the habits of religious charity were so interwoven with the texture of these girls minds, that the evening which had been so interesting to me, was to them only a common evening, marked with nothing particular. It never occurred to them to allude to it; and once or twice when I was tempted to mention it, my imprudence was repressed by a look of the most significant gravity from Lucilla.

I was comforted, however, by observing that my roses were transferred from the hat to the hair. This did not escape the penetrating eye of Phœbe, who archly said, 'I wonder, Lucilla, what particular charm there is in Dame Alice's faded roses. I offered you some fresh ones since we came home. I never knew you prefer withered flowers before.' Lucilla made no answer, but cast down her timid eyes, and outblushed the roses on her head.

CHAP. XLII.

After breakfast next morning the company all dropped off one after another, except Lady Belfield, Miss Stanley, and myself. We had been so busily engaged in looking over the plan of a conservatory, which Sir John proposed to build at Beechwood, his estate in Surry, that we hardly missed them.

Little Celia, whom I call the Rosebud, had climbed up my knees, a favourite station with her, and was begging me to tell her another pretty story. I had before told her so many, that I had exhausted both my memory and my

imagination. Lucilla was smiling at my impoverished invention, when Lady Belfield was called out of the room. Her fair friend rose mechanically to follow her. Her ladyship begged her not to stir, but to employ the five minutes of her absence in carefully criticising the plan she held in her hand, saying, she would bring back another which Sir John had by him; and that Lucilla, who is considered as the last appeal in all matters of this nature, should decide to which the preference should be given, before the architect went to work.

In a moment I forgot my tale and my rosebud, and the conservatory, and every thing but Lucilla, whom I was beginning to address, when little Celia, pulling my coat, said, 'Oh, Charles,' (for so I teach all the little ones to call me,) 'Mrs. Comfit tells me very bad news. She says that your new curricle is come down, and that you are going to run away. Oh! don't go; I can't part with you,' said the little charmer, throwing her arms round my neck.

'Will you go with me, Celia?' said I, kissing her rosy cheek. 'There will be room enough in the curricle.' 'Oh, I should like to go,' said she, 'if Lucilla may go with us. Do, dear Charles, do let Lucilla go to the Priory. She will be very good; won't you, Lucilla?' I ventured to look at Miss Stanley, who tried to laugh without succeeding, and blushed without trying at it.

On my making no reply, for fear of adding to her confusion, Celia looked up piteously in my face, and cried: 'and so you won't let Lucilla go home with you? I am sure the curricle will hold us all nicely; for I am very little, and Lucilla is not very big.'—'Will *you* persuade her, Celia?' said I,—'O,' said she, 'she does not want persuading; she is willing enough, and I will run to papa and mamma and ask their leave, and then Lucilla will go and be glad: won't you Lucilla?'

So saying, she sprung out of my arms, and ran out of the room; Lucilla would have followed and prevented her. I respectfully detained her. How could I neglect such an opportunity? Such an opening as the sweet prattler had given me it was impossible to overlook. The impulse was too powerful to be resisted; I gently replaced her on her seat, and in language which, if it did any justice to my feelings, was the most ardent, tender, and respectful, poured out my whole heart. I believe my words were incoherent; I am sure they were sincere.

She was evidently distressed. Her emotion prevented her replying. But it was the emotion of surprise, not of resentment. Her confusion bore no symptom of displeasure. Blushing and hesitating, she at last said—'My father, Sir—my mother.' Here her voice failed her. I recollected with joy, that on the application of Lord Staunton, she had allowed of no such reference, nay she had forbidden it.

'I take your reference joyfully,' said I, 'only tell me that if I am so happy as to obtain their consent, you will not withhold yours.' She ventured to raise her timid eyes to mine, and her modest but expressive look encouraged me almost as much as any words could have done.

At that moment the door opened, and in came Sir John with the other drawing of the conservatory in his hand. After having examined us both with his keen, critical eye; 'Well, Miss Stanley,' said he, with a look and tone which had more meaning than she could well stand, 'here is the other drawing. As you look as if you had been *calmly* examining the first, you will now give me your *cool*, *deliberate* opinion of the merits of both.' He had the cruelty to lay so much stress on the words calm and deliberate, and to pronounce them in so arch a manner, and so ironical a tone, as clearly showed, he read in her countenance that no epithets could possibly have been so ill applied.

Lady Belfield came in immediately after. 'Well, Caroline,' said he, with a significant glance, 'Miss Stanley has deeply considered the subject since you went; I never saw her look more interested about any thing. I don't think she is dissatisfied on the whole. General approbation is all she now expresses. She will have time to spy out faults hereafter: she sees none at present. All is beauty, grace, and proportion.'

As if this was not enough, in ran Celia quite out of breath—'O, Lucilla,' cried she, 'Papa and Mamma won't let you go with Charles, though I told them you begged and prayed to go.' Lucilla, the pink of whose cheeks was become crimson, said angrily; 'how Celia! what do you mean?' 'Oh, no,' replied the child, 'I mean to say that *I* begged and prayed, and I thought you looked as if you would like to go—though Charles did not ask you, and so I told Papa.'

This was too much. The Belfields laughed outright; but Lady Belfield had the charity to take Lucilla's hand, saying, 'come into my dressing-room, my dear, and let us settle this conservatory business. This prattling child will never let us get on.' Miss Stanley followed, her face glowing with impatience. Celia, whom I detained, called after her—'Papa only said there was not room in the curricle for three, but if 'tis only a little way I am sure we could sit—could not we, Lucilla?' Lucilla was now happily out of hearing.

Though I was hurt that her delicacy had suffered so much, yet I own I hugged the little innocent author of this confusion with additional fondness. Sir John's raillery, now that Lucilla could be no longer pained by it, was cordially received, or rather I was inattentive to every object but the one of which my heart was full. To be heard, to be accepted, though tacitly, to be referred to parents who I knew had no will but hers,

> Was such a sacred and homefelt delight,
> Such sober certainty of waking bliss
> As I ne'er felt till now.

During the remainder of the day I found no means of speaking to Mr. Stanley. Always frank and cheerful, he neither avoided nor sought me, but the arrival of company prevented our being thrown together. Lucilla appeared at dinner as usual: a little graver and more silent, but always unaffected, natural and delicate. Sir John whispered to me, that she had intreated her mother to keep Celia out of the way, till

this curricle business was a little got out of her head.

CHAP. XLIII.

THE next morning, as soon as I thought Mr. Stanley had retreated to his library, I followed him thither. He was busy writing letters. I apologized for my intrusion. He laid his papers aside, and invited me to sit by him.

'You are too good, Sir,' said I, 'to receive with so much kindness a culprit who appears before you ingenuously to acknowledge the infraction of a treaty into which he had the honour of entering with you. I fear that a few days are wanting of my prescribed month. I had resolved to obey you with the most religious scrupulousness; but a circumstance trifling in itself, has led almost irresistibly to a declaration, which in obedience to your commands I had resolved to postpone. But though it is somewhat premature, I hope, however, you will not condemn my precipitancy. I have ventured to tell your charming daughter how necessary she is to my happiness. She does not reject me. She refers me to her father.'

'You have your peace to make with my daughter, I can tell you, Sir,' said Mr. Stanley, looking gravely, 'I fear you have mortally offended her.' I was dreadfully alarmed. 'You know not how you afflict me, Sir,' said I; 'how have I offended Miss Stanley?' 'Not Miss Stanley,' said he, smiling, 'but Miss Celia Stanley,' who extremely resents having been banished from the drawing-room yesterday evening.'

'If Celia's displeasure is all I have to fear, Sir, I am most fortunate. Oh, Sir, my happiness, the peace of my future life is in your hands. But first tell me you forgive the violation of my promise.'

'I am willing to believe, Charles,' replied he, 'that you kept the spirit of your engagement, though you broke it in the letter; and for an unpremeditated breach of an obligation of this nature, we must not, I believe, be too rigorous. Your conduct since your declaration to me, has confirmed the affection which your character had before excited. You were probably surprised and hurt at my cold reception of your proposal; a proposal which gave me a deeper satisfaction than I can express. Yet I was no dissembler in suppressing the pleasure I felt at an address so every way desirable. My dear Charles, I know a little of human nature. I know how susceptible the youthful heart is of impressions. I know how apt these impressions are to be obliterated; a new face, a more advantageous connexion.' 'Hold, Sir,' said I, indignantly interrupting him, 'you cannot think so meanly of me. You cannot rate the son of your friend so low.'

'I am very far indeed, replied he, 'from rating you low. I know you abhor mercenary considerations; but I know also that you are a young man, lively, ardent, impressible. I know the rapid effect which leisure, retirement, rural scenes, daily opportunities of seeing a young woman not ugly, of conversing with a young woman not disagreeable, may produce on the heart, or rather on the imagination. I was aware that seeing no other, conversing with no other, none at least that, to speak honestly, I should consider as a fair competitor, hardly left you an unprejudiced judge of the state of your own heart. I was not sure but that this sort of easy commerce might produce a feeling of complacency which might be mistaken for love. I could not consent that mere accident, mere leisure, the mere circumstance of being thrown together should irrevocably entangle either of you. I was desirous of affording you time to see, to know, and to judge. I would not take advantage of your first emotions. I would not take advantage of your friendship for me. I would not take advantage of your feeling ardently, till I had given you time to judge temperately, and examine fairly.'

I assured him I was equally at a loss to express my gratitude of his kindness, and my veneration of his wisdom; and thanked him in terms of affectionate energy.

'My regard for you,' said he, 'is not of yesterday. I have taken a warm interest in your character and happiness almost ever since you have been in being; and in a way more intimate and personal than you can suspect.'

So saying he arose, unlocked the drawer of a cabinet which stood behind him, and took out a large pacquet of letters. He then resumed his seat, and holding out the direction on the covers, asked me if I was acquainted with the handwriting. A tear involuntarily startled into my eye as I exclaimed—'it is the well known hand of my beloved father.'

'Listen to me attentively,' resumed he. 'You are not ignorant that never were two men more firmly attached by all the ties which ever cemented a Christian friendship, than your lamented father and myself. Our early youth was spent in the same studies, the same pleasures, the same society. 'We took sweet counsel together, and went to the house of God as friends.' He condescendingly overlooked my being five or six years younger than himself. After his marriage with your excellent mother, the current of life carried us different ways, but without causing any abatement in the warmth of our attachment.

'I continued to spend one month every year with him at the Priory, till I myself married. You were then not more than three or four years old; and your engaging manners, and sweet temper, laid the foundation of an affection which had not been diminished by time, and the reports of your progress. Sedentary habits on the part of your father, and a rapidly increasing family on mine, kept us stationary at the two extremities of the kingdom. I settled at the Grove, and both as husband and father have been happiest of the happy.

'As soon as Lucilla was born, your father and I, simultaneously, formed a wish that it might be possible to perpetuate our friendship by the future union of our children.'

When Mr. Stanley uttered these words, my heart beat so fast, and the agitation of my whole frame was so visible, that he paused for a moment; but perceiving that I was all ear, and that I made a silent motion for him to proceed, he went on.

'This was a favourite project with us. We pursued it however with the moderation of men who had a settled sense of the uncertainty of all human things, of human life itself; and with a strong conviction of the probability that our project might never be realized.

'Without too much indulging the illusions of hope, we agreed that there could be no harm in educating our children for each other; in inspiring them with corresponding tastes, similar inclinations, and especially with an exact conformity in their religious views. We never indulged the presumptuous thought of counteracting providential dispensations, of conquering difficulties which time might prove to be insuperable, and above all, we determined never to be so weak, or so unjust, as to think of compelling their affections. We had both studied the human heart long enough to know that it is a perverse and wayward thing. We were convinced that it would not be dictated in a matter which involved its dearest interests; we knew that it liked to pick out its own happiness in its own way.'

As Mr. Stanley proceeded, my heart melted with grateful love for a father who, in making such a provision for my happiness, had generously left my choice so free. But while my conscience seemed to reproach me, as if I had not deserved such tenderness, I rejoiced that my memory had no specific charge to bring against it.

'For all these reasons,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'we mutually agreed to bury our wishes in our own bosoms; to commit the event to Him by whom all events are governed; never to name you to each other but in a general way; to excite no factitious liking, to elicit no artificial passion, and to kindle neither impatience, curiosity, nor interest. Nothing more than a friendly family regard was ever manifested, and the names of Charles and Lucilla were never mentioned together.

'In this you have found your advantage. Had my daughter been accustomed to hear you spoken of with any particularity; had she been conscious that any important consequences might have attached to your visit, you would have lost the pleasure of seeing her in her native simplicity of character. Undesigning and artless, I trust she would have been under any circumstance, but to have been unreserved and open would have been scarcely possible; nor might you, my dear Charles, with your strong sense of filial piety, have been able exactly to discriminate how much of your attachment was choice, how much was duty. The awkwardness of restraint would have diminished the pleasure of intercourse to both.

'Knowing that the childish brother and sister sort of intimacy was not the most promising mode for the development of your mutual sentiments, we agreed that you should not meet till within a year or two of the period when it would be proper that the union, if ever, might take place.

'We were neither of us of an age or character to indulge very romantic ideas of the doctrine of sympathies. Still we saw no reason for excluding such a possibility. If we succeeded, we knew that we were training two beings in a conformity of Christian principles, which, if they did not at once attract affection, would not fail to ensure it, should inferior motives first influence your mutual liking. And if it failed, we should each have educated a Christian, who would be likely to carry piety and virtue into two other families. Much good would attend our success, and no possible evil could attend our failure.

'I could show you, I believe, near a hundred letters on each side, of which you were the unconscious subject. Your father, in his last illness, returned all mine, to prevent a premature discovery, knowing how soon his papers would fall into your hands. If it will give you pleasure, you may peruse a correspondence, of which, for almost twenty years, you were the little hero. In reading my letters you will make yourself master of the character of Lucilla. You will read the history of her mind; you will mark the unfolding of her faculties, and the progress of her education. In those of your father you will not be sorry to trace back your own steps.'

Here Mr. Stanley making a pause, I bowed my grateful acceptance of his obliging offer. I was afraid to speak, I was almost afraid to breathe, lest I should lose a word of a communication so interesting.

'You now see,' resumed Mr. Stanley, 'why you were sent to Edinburgh. Cambridge and Oxford were too near London, and of course too near Hampshire, to have maintained the necessary separation. As soon as you left the University, your father proposed accompanying you on a visit to the Grove. Like fond parents, we had prepared each other to expect to see a being just such a one as each would have wished for the companion of his child.

'This was to be merely a visit of experiment. You were both too young to marry. But we were impatient to place you both in a post of observation; to see the result of a meeting; to mark what sympathy there would be between two minds formed with a view to each other.

'But vain were all the projects of man. Oh! blindness to the future! You doubtless remember, that just as every thing was prepared for your journey southwards, your dear father was seized of the lingering illness of which he died. Till almost the last, he was able to write me in his intervals of ease, short letters on the favourite topic. I remember with what joy his heart dilated, when he told me of your positive refusal to leave him, on his pressing you to pursue the plan already settled, and to make your visit to London and the Grove without him. I will read you the passage from his letter.'—He read as follows:

'In vain have I endeavoured to drive this dear son for a short time from me. He asked, with the indignant feeling of affronted filial piety, if I could propose to him any compensation for his absence from my sick couch? 'I make no sacrifice of duty,' said he, 'in preferring you. If I make any sacrifice, it is to pleasure.'

Seeing my eyes overflow with grateful tenderness, Mr. Stanley said, 'if I can find his last letter I will shew it you.' Then looking over

the pacquet,—'here it is,' said he, putting it into my hands with visible emotion. Neither of us had strength of voice to be able to read it aloud. It was written at several times.

"*Priory, Wednesday, March*, 18, 1807.

'Stanley—I feel that I am dying. Death is awful, my dear friend, but it is neither surprising nor terrible. I have been too long accustomed steadily to contemplate it at a distance, to start from it now it is near.

'As a man I have feared death. As a Christian, I trust, I have overcome this fear. Why should I dread that, which mere reason taught me is not an extinction of my being, and which revelation has convinced me will be an improvement of it? An improvement, O how inconceivable!

'For several years I have habituated myself every day to reflect for some moments on the vanity of life, the certainty of death, the awfulness of judgment, and the duration of eternity.

'The separation from my excellent wife is a trial from which I should utterly shrink, were I not sustained by the Christian hope. When we married, we knew that we were not immortal. I have endeavoured to familiarize to her and to myself the inevitable separation, by constantly keeping up in the minds of both the idea that one of us *must* be the survivor. I have endeavoured to make that idea supportable by the conviction that the survivorship will be short—the re-union certain—speedy—eternal. *O præclarum diem!** &c. &c. How gloriously does Christianity exalt the rapture by ennobling the objects, of this sublime apostrophe!"

Friday, the 20th.

'As to the union of my son with Lucilla, you and I, my friend, have long learned from an authority higher than that classical one, of which we have frequently admired the expression, and lamented the application, that long views, and remote hopes, and distant expectations, become not so short-sighted, so short-lived a creature as man,† I trust, however, that our plans have been carried on with a complete conviction of this brevity; with an entire acquiescence in the will of the great Arbiter of life and death. I have told Charles, it is my wish that he should visit you soon after my death. I durst not command it—for this incomparable youth, who has sacrificed so much to his father, will find that he has a mother worthy of still greater sacrifices. As soon as he can prevail on himself to leave her, you will see him. May he and your Lucilla behold each other with the eyes, with which, each of us views his own child! If they see each other with indifference, never let them know our wishes. It would perplex and hamper those to whom we wish perfect freedom of thought and action. If they conceive a mutual attachment, reveal our project. In such minds, it will strengthen that attachment.—The approbation of a living and the desire of a deceased parent will sanctify their union.

'I must break off through weakness.'

'*Monday*, 23.

'I resume my pen, which I thought I had held for the last time. May God bless and direct our children! Infinite wisdom permits me not to see their union. Indeed my interest in all earthly things weakens. Even my solicitude for this event is somewhat diminished. The most important circumstance, if it have not God for its object, now seems comparatively little. The longest life, with all its concerns, shrinks to a point in the sight of a dying man whose eye is filled by eternity. Eternity! Oh, my friend, Eternity is a depth which no geometry can measure, no arithmetic calculate, no imagination conceive, no rhetoric describe. The eye of a dying Christian seems gifted to penetrate depths hid from the wisdom of philosophy. It looks athwart the dark valley without dismay, cheered by the bright scene beyond it. It looks with a kind of chastised impatience to that land where happiness will be only holiness perfected. There all the promises of the gospel will be accomplished. There afflicted virtue will rejoice at its past trials, and acknowledge their subservience to its present bliss. There the secret self-denials of the righteous shall be recognized and rewarded—and all the hopes of the Christian shall have their complete consummation.'

Saturday, 28th.

'My weakness increases—I have written this at many intervals. My body faints, but in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Oh, Stanley! if pain is trying, if death is awful to him, who knows in whom he has trusted; how is pain endured, how is death encountered by those who have no such support?'

Tuesday, the 31st.

'I am better to-day—If I experience little of that rapture which some require, as the sign of their acceptance, I yet have a good hope through grace. Nay there are moments when I rejoice with joy unspeakable. I would not produce this joy as any certain criterion of my safety, because, from the nature of my disease, there are also moments when my spirits sink, and this might equally furnish arguments against my state, to those who decide by frames and feelings. I think my faith as sound, my pardon as sure, when these privileges are withdrawn, as when I enjoy them. No depression of spirits can make my evidences less solid, though it may render the review of them less delightful.'

Friday, 3d April.

'Stanley! my departure is at hand. My eternal redemption draweth nigh. My hope is full of immortality. This is my comfort—not that my sins are few or small, but that they are, I humbly trust, pardoned, through him who loved me, and gave himself for me. Faithful is HE that has promised, and HIS promises are not too great to be made good—for Omniscience is my promiser, and I have Omnipotence itself for my security.—Adieu!

* See this whole beautiful passage in Cicero de Senectute.

† Horace, in speaking of the brevity and uncertainty of life, seldom fails to produce it as an incentive to sensual indulgence. See particularly the fourth and eleventh Odes of the first book.

* * * * *

On the cover was written, in Mr. Stanley's hand —he died three days after!

* * * * *
* * * * *

It is impossible to describe the mingled and conflicting emotions of my soul, while I perused this letter. Gratitude that I had possessed such a father—sorrow that I had lost him—transport in anticipating an event which had been his earnest wish for almost twenty years—regret that he was not permitted to witness it—devout joy that he was in a state so superior to even *my* sense of happiness—a strong feeling of the uncertainty and brevity of *all* happiness—a solemn resolution that I would never act unworthy of such a father—a fervent prayer that I might be enabled to keep that resolution:—all these emotions so agitated and divided my whole mind as to render me unfit for any society, even for that of Lucilla. I withdrew, gratefully pressing Mr. Stanley's hand; he kindly returned the pressure, but neither of us attempted to speak.

He silently put my father's packet into my hands. I shut myself into my apartment, and read for three hours, letters for which I hope to be the better in time and in eternity. I found in them a treasure of religious wisdom, excellent maxims of human prudence, a thorough acquaintance with life and manners, a keen insight into human nature in the abstract, and a nice discrimination of individual characters; admirable documents for general education, the application of those documents to my particular turn of character, and diversified methods for improving it.—The pure delight to which I looked forward in reading these letters with Lucilla, soon became my predominant feeling.

I returned to the company with a sense of felicity, which the above feelings and reflections had composed into a soothing tranquillity. My joy was sobered without being abated. I received the cordial congratulations of my friends. Mrs. Stanley behaved to me with increased affection, she presented me to her daughter, with whom I afterwards passed two hours. This interview left me nothing to desire, but that my gratitude to the Almighty Dispenser of happiness might bear in some little proportion to his blessings.

As I was passing through the hall, after dinner, I spied little Celia peeping out of the door of the children's apartment, in hope of seeing me pass. She flew to me, and begged I would take her into the company. As I knew the interdict was taken off, I carried her into the saloon where they were sitting. She ran into Lucilla's arms and said, in a voice which she meant for a whisper, but loud enough to be heard by the whole company, 'Do, dear Lucilla, forgive me, I will never say another word about the curricle, and you shan't go to the Priory since you don't like it.' Lucilla found means to silence her, by showing her the pictures in the 'Peacock at Home;' and without looking up to observe the general smile, contrived to attract the sweet child's attention to this beautiful little poem, in spite of Sir John, who did his utmost to widen the mischief.

CHAP. XLIV.

The next day in the afternoon Dr. Barlow called on us. By the uncommon seriousness of his countenance I saw something was the matter. 'You will be shocked,' said he, 'to hear that Mr. Tyrrel is dying, if not actually dead. He was the night before last, seized with a paralytic stroke. He lay a long time without sense or motion; a delirium followed. In a short interval of reason he sent earnestly imploring to see me. Seldom have I witnessed so distressing a scene.

'As I entered the room he fixed his glassy eyes full upon me, quite unconscious who I was, and groaned out in an inward hollow voice—'Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries are come upon you.' I asked how he did:—he replied still from St. James—'How? why my gold and silver are cankered, the rust of them shall witness against me; they eat up my flesh as it were fire.'

'I was astonished,' continued Dr. Barlow, 'to see so exact a memmory coupled with so wild an imagination. 'Be composed, Sir,' said I, seeing he began to recollect me, 'this deep contrition is a favourable symptom.' 'Dr. Barlow,' replied he, grasping my hand with a vehemence which corresponded with his look, 'have you never heard of riches kept by the owner thereof to his hurt? Restitution! Doctor, restitution!—and it must be immediate, or it will be too late.' I was now deeply alarmed. 'Surely, Sir,' said I, 'you are not unhappily to adopt St. James's next words—'forgive me;—but you cannot surely have 'defrauded.'' 'O no, no,' cried he, 'I have been what the world calls honest, but not what the Judge of quick and dead will call so. The restitution I must make is not to the rich, for any thing I have *taken* from them, but to the poor, for what I have *kept* from them. Hardness of heart would have been but a common sin in a common man; but I have been a professor, Doctor, I will not say a hypocrite, for I deceived myself as much as others. But oh! how hollow has my profession been!'

'Here seeing him ready to faint,' continued Dr. Barlow, 'I imposed silence on him, till he had taken a cordial. This revived him, and he went on.

'"I was miserable in my early course of profligacy. I was disappointed in my subsequent schemes of ambition. I expected more from the world than it had to give. But I continued to love it with all its disappointments. Under whatever new shape it presented its temptations, it was still my idol. I had always loved money; but other passions more turbulent had been hitherto predominant. These I at length renounce. Covetousness now became my reigning sin. Still it was to the broken cistern that I cleaved. Still it was on the broken reed that I leaned. Still I was unhappy, I was at a loss whither to turn for comfort. Of religion I scarcely knew the first principles.

'"In this state I met with a plausible, but ill-informed man. He had zeal, and a sort of popular eloquence; but he wanted knowledge, and argument, and soundness. I was, however struck with his earnestness, and with the im-

portance of some truths which, though common to others, were new to me. But his scheme was hollow and imperfect, and his leading principles subversive of all morality."'

'Here Mr. Tyrrel paused. I entreated him to spare himself; but after a few deep groans he proceeded.

'"Whether his opinions had made *himself* immoral I never inquired. It is certain they were calculated to make his hearers so. Instead of lowering my spiritual disease, by prescribing repentance and humility, he inflamed it by cordials. All was high—all was animating—all was safe! On no better ground than my avowed discontent, he landed me at once in a security so much the more fatal, as it laid asleep all apprehension. He mistook my uneasiness for a complete change. My talking of sin was made a substitute for renouncing it. Proud of a rich man for a convert, he led me to mistake conviction for conversion. I was buoyed up with an unfounded confidence. I adopted a religion which promised pardon without repentance, happiness without obedience, and heaven without holiness. I had found a short road to peace. I never inquired if it were a safe one."'

'The poor man now fell back, unable to speak for some minutes. Then rallying again, he resumed, in a still more broken voice.

'"Here I stop short. My religion had made no change in my heart, it therefore made none in my life. I read good books, but they were low and fanatical in their language, and antinomian in their principle. But my religious ignorance was so deplorable, that their novelty caught strong hold of me."'

'I now desired him,' continued Dr. Barlow, 'not to exhaust himself farther. I prayed with him. He was struck with awe at the holy energy in the office for the sick, which was quite new to him. He owned he had not suspected the church to be so evangelical. This is no uncommon error. Hot-headed and superficial men, when they are once alarmed, are rather caught by phrases than sentiments, by terms than principles. It is this ignorance of the doctrines of the Bible and of the church in which men of the world unhappily live, that makes it so difficult for us to address them under sickness and affliction. We have no common ground on which to stand; no intelligible medium through which to communicate with them. It is having both a language and a science to learn at once.'

In the morning Dr. Barlow again visited Mr. Tyrrel. He found him still in great perturbation of mind. Feeling himself quite sensible he had begun to make his will. He had made large bequests to several charities. Dr. Barlow highly approved of this; but reminded him, that though he himself would never recommend charity as a commutation or a bribe; yet some immediate acts of bounty, while there was a possibility of his recovery, would be a better earnest of his repentance, than the bequeathing his whole estate when it could be of no further use to himself. He was all acquiescence.

He desired to see Mr. Stanley. He recommended to him his nephew, over whose conduct Mr. Stanley promised to have an eye. He made him and Dr. Barlow joint executors. He offered to leave them half his fortune. With their usual disinterestedness they positively refused to accept it, and suggested to him a better mode of bestowing it.

He lifted up his hands and eyes, saying, 'This is indeed Christianity; pure and undefiled religion! If it be not faith, it is its fruits. If it be not the procuring cause of salvation it is one evidence of a safe state. O, Mr. Stanley, our last conversation has sunk deep into my heart. You had begun to pull the veil from my eyes; but nothing tears the whole mask off, like the hand of death, like impending judgment. How little have I considered eternity! Judgment was not in all my thoughts—I had got rid of the terrors of responsibility! O, Doctor Barlow, is there any hope for me?'

'Sir,' replied the Doctor, 'your sin is not greater because you feel it; so far from it, your danger diminishes in proportion as it is discerned. Your condition is not worse, but better, because you are become sensible of your sins and wants. I judge far more favourably of your state now, than when you thought so well of it. Your sense of the evil of your own heart is the best proof of your sincerity; your repentance towards God is the best evidence of your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.'

'Doctor, it is too late,' replied the sick man. 'How can I shew that my repentance is sincere? In this miserable condition how can I glorify God?'

'Sir,' replied Dr. Barlow, 'you must lay anew the whole foundation of your faith. That Saviour whom you had unhappily adopted as a substitute for virtue, must be received as a propitiation for sin. If you recover, you must devote yourself, spirit, soul, and body to his service. You must adorn his gospel by your conduct; you must plead his cause in your conversation; you must recommend his doctrines by your humility; you must dedicate every talent God has given you to his glory. If he continue to visit you with sickness, this will call new and more difficult Christian graces into exercise. If by this severe affliction you lose all ability to do God actual service, you may perhaps glorify him more effectually by casting yourself entirely on him for support, by patient suffering for his sake who suffered every thing for yours. You will have an additional call for trusting in the divine promises; an additional occasion for imitating the divine example; a stronger motive for saying practically, the cup which my Father has given me shall I not drink it.'

'O, Doctor,' said the unhappy man, 'my remorse arises not merely from my having neglected this or that moral duty, this or that act of charity, but from the melancholy evidence which that neglect affords that my religion was not sincere.'

'I repeat, Sir,' said Dr. Barlow, 'that your false security and unfounded hope were more alarming than your present distress of mind. Examine your own heart, fear not to probe it to the bottom; it will be a salutary smart. As you are able, I will put you into a course of reading the Scriptures, with a view to promote self-examination. Try yourself by the strait rule they hold out, pray fervently that the Al-

mighty may assist you by his Spirit, and earnestly endeavour to suffer as well as to do his whole will.'

Dr. Barlow says he thinks there is now as little prospect of his perfect recovery, as of his immediate dissolution; but as far as one human creature can judge of the state of another, he believes the visitation will be salutary.

CHAP. XLV.

As we were setting at supper, after Dr. Barlow had left us, Lady Belfield, turning to me, said, 'she had had a governess proposed to her from a quarter I should little expect to hear.' She then produced a letter, informing her that Mr. Fentham was lately found dead in his bed of an apoplexy. That he had died insolvent; and that his large income ceasing with his life, his family were plunged into the utmost distress. That Mrs. Fentham experienced the most mortifying neglect from her numerous and noble friends, who now, that she could no longer amuse them with balls, concerts, and suppers, revenged themselves by wondering what she could ever mean by giving them at all, and declaring what a bore it had always been to them to go to her parties. They now insisted that people ought to confine themselves to their own station, and live within their income, though they themselves had lifted her above her station, and had led her to exceed her income.

'The poor woman,' continued Lady Belfield, 'is in extreme distress. Her magnificently furnished house will go but a very little way towards satisfying her creditors. That house, whose clamorous knocker used to keep the neighbourhood awake, is already reduced to utter stillness. The splendid apartments, brilliant with lustres and wax-lights, and crowded with company, are become a frightful solitude, terrifying to those to whom solitude has not one consolation or resource to offer. Poor Mrs. Fentham is more wounded by this total desertion of those whom she so sumptuously entertained, and so obsequiously flattered, than by her actual wants.'

'It is,' said Sir John, 'a fine exemplification of the friendships of the world,

Confederacies in vice, or leagues in pleasure.

'Lady Denham, when applied to,' resumed Lady Belfield, 'said, that she was extremely sorry for them; but as she thought extravagance the greatest of all faults, it would look like an encouragement to imprudence if she did any thing for them. Their extravagance, however, had never been objected to by her, till the fountain which supplied it was stopped: and she had for years made no scruple of winning money almost nightly from the woman whose distresses she now refused to relieve. Lady Denham farther assigned the misery into which the elopement of her darling child with Signior Squallini had brought her, as an additional reason for withholding her kindness from Mrs. Fentham.'

'It is a reason,' said I, interrupting Lady Belfield, 'which, in a right-turned mind, would have a directly contrary operation. When domestic calamities overtake ourselves, is it not the precise moment for holding out a hand to the wretched? for diminishing the misery abroad which at home may be irretrievable?

'Lady Bab Lawless, to whom Mrs. Fentham applied for assistance, coolly advised her to send her daughters to service, saying, 'that she knew of no acquirement they had which would be of any use to them, except their skill in hair-dressing.'

'It seemed a cruel reproach from a professed friend, said Sir John, and yet it is a literal truth. I know not what can be done for them, or for what they are fit. Their accomplishments might be turned to some account, if they were accompanied with real knowledge, useful acquirements, or sober habits. Mrs. Fentham wishes us to recommend them as governesses. But can I conscientiously recommend to others, girls with whom I could not trust my own family? Had they been taught to look no higher than the clerks of their father, who had been a clerk himself, they might have been happy; but those very men will now think them as much beneath themselves, as the young ladies lately thought they were above them.'

'I have often,' said Mr. Stanley, 'been amused with observing what a magic transformation the same event produces on two opposite classes of characters. The misfortunes of their acquaintance convert worldly friends into instantaneous strictness of principle. The faults of the distressed are produced as a plea for their own hard-hearted covetousness. While that very misfortune so relaxes the strictness of good men, that the faults are forgotten in the calamity; and they, who had been perpetually warning the prodigal of his impending ruin, when that ruin comes are the first to relieve him. The worldly friend sees only the errors of the sufferer, the Christian sees only his distress.'

It was agreed among us, that some small contribution must be added to a little sum, that had been already raised, for their immediate relief; but that nothing was so difficult, as effectually to serve persons whose views were so disproportioned to their deserts, and whose habits would be too likely to carry corruption into families who might receive them from charitable motives.

The conversation then fell insensibly on the pleasure we had enjoyed since we had been together; and on the delights of rational society, and confidential intercourse such as ours had been, where minds mingled, and affection and esteem were reciprocal. Mr. Stanley said many things which evinced how happily his piety was combined with the most affectionate tenderness of heart. Indeed I had always been delighted to observe in him, a quality which is not so common as it is thought to be, a thorough capacity for friendship.

'My dear Stanley,' said Sir John, 'it is of the very essence of human enjoyments, that they must have an end. I observe with regret, that the time assigned for our visit is more than elapsed. We have prolonged it beyond our intention, beyond our convenience: but we have, I trust, been imbibing principles, stealing habits,

and borrowing plans, which will ever make us consider this visit as an important era in our lives.

'My excellent Caroline is deeply affected with all she has seen and heard at the Grove. We must now leave it, though not without reluctance. We must go and endeavour to imitate what, six weeks ago, we almost feared to contemplate. 'Lady Belfield and I have compared notes. On the most mature deliberation, we agree that we have lived long enough to the world. We agree that it is time to begin to live to ourselves, and to Him who made us. We propose in future to make our winters in London much shorter. We intend to remove early every spring to Beechwood, which we will no longer consider as a temporary residence, but as our home; we will supply it with every thing that may make it interesting, and improving to us all. We are resolved to educate our children in the fear of God. Our fondness for them is rather increased than diminished; but in the exercise of that fondness, we will remember that we are to train them up for immortality. We will watch over them as creatures for whose eternal well being a vast responsibility will attach to ourselves.

'In our new plan of life, we shall have fewer sacrifices to make than most people in our situation; for we have long felt a growing indifference for things which we appeared to enjoy. Of the world, we are only going to give up that part which is not worth keeping, and of which we are really weary. In securing our real friends, we shall not regret, if we drop some acquaintance by the way. The wise and the worthy we shall more than ever cherish. In your family, we have enjoyed those true pleasures which entail no repentance. That cheerfulness which alone is worthy of accountable beings, we shall industriously maintain in our own. I bless God if we have not so many steps to tread back, as some others have, who are entering, upon principle, on a new course of life.

'We have always endeavoured, though with much imperfection, to fill some duties to each other, to our children, to our friends, and to the poor. But of the prime duty, the main spring of action and of all moral goodness, duty to God, we have not been sufficiently mindful. I hope we have at length learnt to consider Him as the fountain of all good, and the gospel of his Son, as the fountain of all hope. This new principle, I am persuaded, will never impair our cheerfulness, it will only fix it on a solid ground. By purifying the motive it will raise the enjoyment.

'But if we have not so many habits to correct as poor Carlton had, I question if we have not as many difficulties to meet in another way. His loose course was discreditable. His vices made him stand ill with the world. He would therefore acquire nothing but credit in changing his outward practice. Lady Belfield and I, on the contrary, stand rather too well with the world. We had just that external regularity, that cool indifference about our own spiritual improvement, and the wrong courses of our friends, which procure regard, because they do not interfere with others, nor excite jealousy for ourselves. But we have now to encounter that censure, which we have perhaps hitherto been too solicitous to avoid. It will still be our trial, but I humbly trust that it will be no longer our snare. Our morality pleased, because it seemed to proceed merely from a sense of propriety; our strictness will offend, when it is found to spring from a principle of religion.

'To what tendency in the heart of man, my dear Stanley, is it owing, that religion is commonly seen to excite more suspicion than the want of it? When a man of the world meets with a gay, thoughtless, amusing person, he seldom thinks of enquiring whether such a one be immoral, or an unbeliever, or a profligate, though the bent of his conversation rather leans that way. Satisfied with what he finds him, he feels little solicitude to ascertain what he really is. But no sooner does actual piety show itself in any man, than your friends are putting you on your guard;—there is instantly a suggestion, a hint, a suspicion. 'Does he not carry things too far? 'Is he not righteous over much?' 'Is he not intemperate in his zeal?' 'Above all things is he *sincere?*' and in short—for that is the centre in which all the lines of suspicion and reprobation meet, '*Is he not a methodist?*'

'I trust, however, that, through divine grace our minds will be fortified against all attacks on this our weak side; this pass through which the sort of assaults most formidable to *us* will be likely to enter. I was mentioning this danger to Caroline this morning. She opened her Bible, over which she now spends much of her solitary time, and with an emphasis foreign from her usual manner read,

'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?'

As Sir John repeated these words, I saw Lucilla, who was sitting next Lady Belfield, snatch one of her hands and kiss it, with a rapture which she had no power to controul. It was evident that nothing but our presence restrained her from rising to embrace her friend. Her fine eyes glistened, but seeing that I observed her, she gently let go the hand she held, and tried to look composed. I cannot describe the chastised but not less fervent joy of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley. Their looks expressed the affectionate interest they took in Sir John's honest declaration. Their hearts overflowed with gratitude to Him without whom, 'nothing is strong, nothing is holy.' For my own part, I felt myself raised

Above this visible diurnal sphere.

Sir John afterwards said, 'I begin more and more to see the scantiness of all morality which has not the love of God for its motive. *That* virtue will not carry us safely, and will not carry us far, which looks to human estimation as its reward. As it was a false and inadequate principle which first set it agoing, it will always stop short of the true ends of goodness. Do not think, my dear Stanley,' continued he, 'that I fancy it is only our habits which want improving. Dr. Barlow has convinced me that there must be *a mutation of the whole man:* that the change in our practice must grow out of a new motive; not merely out of an amended principle, but a new principle; not an improve-

ment in some particulars, but a general determining change.'

'My dear Belfield,' replied Mr. Stanley, 'all reformation short of this, though it may obtain credit, brings neither peace nor acceptance. This change shows itself, gradually perhaps, but unequivocally, by enlightening the understanding, awakening the conscience, purifying the affections, subduing the will, reforming the life.'

Lady Belfield expressed, with a sweet humility, her deep conviction of the truth of these remarks. After some farther discussion, she said, 'Sir John, I have been seriously thinking that I ought not to indulge in the expense of this intended conservatory. We will, if you please, convert the money to the building a charity school. I cannot consent to incur such a superfluous expense merely for my amusement.'

'My dear Caroline,' replied Sir John, 'through the undeserved goodness of God, my estate is so large, and through your excellent management it is so unimpaired, that we will not give up the conservatory, unless Mr. Stanley thinks we ought to give it up. But we will adopt Lucilla's idea of combining a charity with an indulgence —we will associate the charity school with the conservatory. This union will be a kind of monument to our friends at the Grove, from whom you have acquired the love of plants, and I of religious charity.'

We all looked with anxious expectation at Mr. Stanley. He gave it as his opinion, that as Lady Belfield was now resolved to live the greater part of the year in the country, she ought to have some amusements in lieu of those she was going to give up. 'Costly decorations and expensive gardens,' continued he, 'at a place where the proprietors do not so much as *intend* to reside, have always appeared to me among the infatuations of opulence. To the expenses which they do not *want*, it is adding an expense which they do not *see*. But surely, at a mansion where an affluent family actually live, all reasonable indulgences should be allowed. And where a garden and green-house are to supply to the proprietor, the place of the abdicated theatre and ball room; and especially when it is to be a means in her hands of attaching her children to the country, and of teaching them to love home, I declare myself in favour of the conservatory.'

Lucilla's eyes sparkled, but she said nothing.

'It would be unfair,' continued Mr. Stanley, 'to blame too severely those, who, living constantly in the country, give a little into its appropriate pleasures. The real objects of censure seem to be those who, grafting bad taste on bad habits, bring into the country the amusements of the town, and superadd to such as are local, and natural, and innocent, such as are foreign, artificial, and corrupt.'

'My dear Stanley,' said Sir John, 'we have resolved to indemnify our poor neighbours for two injuries which we have been doing them. The one is, by our having lived so little among them: for I have now learnt, that the mere act of residence is a kind of charity, even in the uncharitable, as it necessarily causes much money to be spent, even where little is given. The other is, that we will endeavour to make up for our past indifference to their spiritual concerns by now acting as if we were aware that the poor have souls as well as bodies; and that, in the great day of account, the care of both will attach to our responsibility.'

Such a sense of sober joy seemed to pervade our little party, that we were not aware that the night was far advanced. Our minds were too highly wrought for much loquacity, when Phœbe suddenly exclaimed, 'Papa, why is it that happiness does not make one merry? I never was half so happy in my life, and yet I can hardly forbear crying: and I believe it is catching, Sir, for look, Lucilla is not much wiser than myself.'

The next day but one after this conversation, our valuable friends left us. Our separation was softened by the prospect of a speedy meeting. The day before they set out, Lady Belfield made an earnest request to Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, that they would have the goodness to receive Fanny Stokes into their family for a few months, previous to her entering theirs as governess. 'I can think of no method so likely,' continued she, 'to raise the tone of education in my own family, as the transfusion into it of your spirit, and the adoption of your regulations.'—Mr. and Mrs. Stanley most cheerfully acceded to the proposal.

Sir John said, 'I was meditating the same request, but with an additional clause tacked to it, that of sending our eldest girl with Fanny, that the child also may get imbued with something of your family spirit, and be broken into better habits than she has acquired from our hitherto relaxed discipline.' This proposal was also cordially approved.

CHAP. XLVI.

Dr. Barlow came to the Grove to take leave of our friends. He found Sir John and I sitting in the library with Mr. Stanley. 'As I came from Mr. Tyrrel's,' said the Doctor, 'I met Mr. Flam going to see him. He seemed so anxious about his old friend, that a wish strongly presented itself to my mind that the awful situation of the sick man might be salutary to him.

'It is impossible to say,' continued he, 'what injury religion has suffered from the opposite characters of these two men. Flam, who gives himself no concern about the matter, is kind and generous; while Tyrrel, who has made a high profession, is mean and sordid. It has been said, of what use is religion, when morality has made Mr. Flam a better man than religion makes Mr. Tyrrel? Thus men of the world reason! But nothing can be more false than their conclusions. Flam is naturally an open, warm hearted man, but incorrect in many respects, and rather loose in his principles. His natural good propensities religion would have improved into solid virtues, and would have cured the more exceptionable parts of his character. But from religion he stands aloof.

'Tyrrel is naturally narrow and selfish. Religion has not made, but found him such. But what a religion has he adopted! A mere assumption of terms; a dead, inoperative, uninfluencing

notion, which he has taken up: not, I hope, with a view to deceive others, but by which he has grossly deceived himself. He had heard that religion was a cure for an uneasy mind; but he did not attend to the means by which the cure is effected, and it relieved not him.

'The corrupt principle whence his vices proceeded was not subdued. He did not desire to subdue it, because in the struggle he must have parted with what he resolved to keep. He adopted what he believed was a cheap and easy religion; little aware that the great fundamental scripture doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ was a doctrine powerfully opposing our corruptions, and involving in its comprehensive requirements, a new heart and a new life.'

At this moment Mr. Flam called at the Grove. 'I am just come from Tyrrel,' said he. 'I fear it is nearly over with him. Poor Ned! he is very low, almost in despair. I always told him that the time would come when he would be glad to exchange notions for actions. I am grieved for him. The remembrance of a kind deed or two done to a poor tenant, would be some comfort to him now, at a time when every man stands in need of comfort.'

'Sir,' said Dr. Barlow, 'the scene which I have lately witnessed at Mr. Tyrrel's makes me serious. If you and I were alone, I am afraid it would make me old. I will, however, suppress the answer I was tempted to make you, because I should not think it prudent or respectful to utter before company what, I am persuaded your good sense would permit me to say were we alone.'

'Doctor,' replied the good tempered, but thoughtless man, 'don't stand upon ceremony. You know I love a debate, and I insist on your saying what was in your mind to say. I don't fear getting out of any scrape you can bring me into. You are too well bred to offend, and, I hope, I am too well-natured to be easily offended. Stanley, I know, always takes your side. Sir John, I trust, will take mine; and so will the young man here, if he is like most other young men.'

'Allow me then to observe,' returned Dr. Barlow, 'that if Mr. Tyrrel has unhappily deceived himself, by resting too exclusively on a mere speculative faith; a faith which by his conduct did not evince itself to be of the right sort; yet, on the other hand, a dependence for salvation on our own benevolence, our own integrity, or any other good quality we may possess, is an error not less fatal, and far more usual. Such a dependence does as practically set at nought the Redeemer's sacrifice, as the avowed rejection of the infidel. Honesty and benevolence are among the noblest qualities; but where the one is practised for reputation, and the other from mere feeling, they are sadly delusive as to the ends of practical goodness. They have both indeed their reward; integrity in the credit it brings, and benevolence in the pleasure it yields. Both are beneficial to society; both, therefore, are politically valuable. Both sometimes lead me to admire the ordinations of that over-ruling power, which often uses as instruments of public good, men who acting well in many respects, are essentially useful to others; but who, acting from motives merely human, forfeit for themselves that high reward which those virtues would obtain, if they were evidences of a lively faith, and the results of Christian principle. Think me not severe, Mr. Flam. To be personal is always extremely painful to me.'

'No, no, Doctor,' replied he, 'I know you mean well. 'Tis your trade to give good counsel; and your lot I suppose to have it seldom followed. I shall hear you without being angry. You in your turn must not be angry if I hear you without being better.'

'I respect you, Sir, too much,' replied Dr. Barlow, 'to deceive you in a matter of such infinite importance. For one man who errs on Mr. Tyrrel's principle, a hundred err on yours. His mistake is equally pernicious, but is not equally common. I must repeat it. For one whose soul is endangered through an unwarrantable dependance on the Saviour, multitudes are destroyed not only by the open rejection, but through a fatal neglect of the salvation wrought by him. Many more perish through a presumptuous confidence in their own merits, than through an unscriptural trust in the merits of Christ.'

'Well, Doctor,' replied Mr. Flam, 'I must say, that I think an ounce of morality will go farther toward making up my account, than a ton of religion, for which no one but myself would be the better.'

'My dear Sir,' said Dr. Barlow, 'I will not presume to determine between the exact comparative proportions of two ingredients both of which are so indispensable in the composition of a Christian. I dare not hazard the assertion which of the two is the more perilous state; but I think I am justified in saying which of the two cases occurs most frequently.'

Mr. Flam said, 'I should be sorry, Dr. Barlow, to find out at this time of day that I have been all my life long in an error.'

'Believe me, Sir,' said Dr. Barlow, 'it is better to find it out now, than at a still later period. One good quality can never be made to supply the absence of another. There are no substitutes in this warfare. Nor can all the good qualities put together, if we could suppose them to unite in one man, and to exist without religion, stand proxy for the death of Christ. If they could so exist, it would be in the degree only, and not in the perfection required by that law which says, *do this and live*. So kind a neighbour as you are, so honest a gentleman, so generous a master as you are allowed to be, I cannot, Sir, think without pain of your losing the reward of such valuable qualities, by your placing your hope of eternal happiness in the exercise of them. Believe me, Mr. Flam, it is easier for a compassionate man, if he be not religious, to 'give all his goods to the poor,' than to bring every thought, 'nay than to bring *any* thought' into captivity to the obedience of Christ! But be assured, if we give ever so much with our hands, while we withhold our hearts from God, though we may do much good to others, we do none to ourselves.'

'Why, surely,' said Mr. Flam, 'you don't mean to insinuate that I should be in a safer state if I never did a kind thing!'

'Quite the contrary,' replied Dr. Barlow, 'but I could wish to see your good actions exalted, by springing from a higher principle, I mean the love of God; ennobled by being practised to a higher end, and purified by your renouncing all self-complacency in the performance.'

'But is there not less danger, Sir, said Mr. Flam, 'in being somewhat proud of what one really *does*, than in doing nothing? And is it not more excusable to be a little satisfied with what one really *is*, than in hypocritically pretending to be what one is *not*?'

'I must repeat,' returned Dr. Barlow, 'that I cannot exactly decide on the question of relative enormity between two opposite sins. I cannot pronounce which is the best of two states so very bad.'

'Why now, Doctor,' said Mr. Flam, 'what particular sin can you charge me with?'

'I erect not myself into an accuser,' replied Dr. Barlow; 'but permit me to ask you, Sir, from what motive is it that you avoid any wrong practice? Is there any one sin from which you abstain through fear of offending your Maker?'

'As to that,' replied Mr. Flam, 'I can't say I ever considered about the motive of the thing. I thought it was quite enough not to do it. Well but Doctor, since we are gone so far in the catechism, what duty to my neighbours can you convict me of omitting?'

'It will be said, Sir,' said the Doctor, 'if you can indeed stand so close a scrutiny, as that to which you challenge me, even on your own principles. But tell me, with that frank honesty which marks your character, does your kindness to your neighbour spring from the true fountain, the love of God? That you do many right things I am most willing to allow. But do you perform them from a sense of obedience to the law of your Maker? Do you perform them because they are commanded in his word, and conformable to his will?'

'I can't say I do,' said Mr. Flam, 'but if the thing be right in itself, that appears to me to be all in all. It seems hard to encumber a man of business like me with the action and motive too. Surely if I serve a man, it can make no difference to him, *why* I serve him.'

'To yourself, my dear Sir,' said the Doctor, 'it makes all the difference in the world. Besides, good actions, performed on any other principle than obedience, are not only spurious as to their birth, but they are defective in themselves; they commonly want something in weight and measure.'

Why, Doctor,' said Mr. Flam, 'I have often heard you say in the pulpit that the best are not perfect. Now, as this is the case, I will tell you how I manage. I think it a safe way to average one's good qualities; to throw a bad one against a good one, and if the balance sinks on the right side the man is safe.'

Doctor Barlow shook his head, and was beginning to express his regret at such a delusive casuistry, when Mr. Flam interrupted him by saying, 'Well, Doctor, my great care in life has been to avoid all suspicion of hypocrisy.'

'You cannot do better,' replied Dr. Barlow, 'than to avoid its *reality*. But, for my own part, I believe religious hypocrisy to be rather a rare vice among persons of your station of life. Among the vulgar, indeed, I fear it is not so rare. In neighbourhoods where there is much real piety, there is no small danger of some false profession. But among the higher classes of society, serious religion confers so little credit on him who professes it, that a gentleman is not likely to put on appearances from which he knows he is far more likely to lose reputation than to acquire it. When such a man, therefore, assumes the character of piety, I own I always feel disposed to give him full credit for possessing it. His religion may indeed be mistaken; it may be defective; it may be unsound; but the chances are very much in favour of its not being insincere. Where the "fruits of the Spirit abound, they will appear."'

'Now, my dear Doctor,' replied Mr. Flam, 'is not that cant? What do you mean by the fruits of the Spirit? Would it not have been more worthy of your good sense to have said morality and virtue? Would not these terms have been more simple and intelligible?'

'They might be so,' replied the Doctor, 'but they would not rise quite so high. They would not take in my *whole* meaning. The fruit of the Spirit indeed always includes *your* meaning, but it includes much more. It is something more than worldly morality, something holier than mere human virtue. I rather conceive morality, in your sense, to be the effect of natural temper, natural conscience, or worldly prudence, or perhaps a combination of all three. The fruit of the Spirit is the morality of the renewed heart. Worldly morality is easily satisfied with itself. It sits down contented with its own meagre performances—with legal honesty, with bare weight justice. It seldom giveth a particle "that is not in the bond." It is always making out its claim to doubtful indulgence; it litigates its right to every inch of contested enjoyment; and is so fearful of not getting enough, that it commonly takes more than its due. It is one of the cases where "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."'

'It obtains, however, its worldly reward. It procures a good degree of respect and commendation; but it is not attended by the silent train of the Christian graces, with that 'joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,' which are the fruits of the Spirit, and the evidences of a Christian.—These graces are calculated to adorn all that is right with all that is amiable, 'whatsoever things are honest and just,' with 'whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.' And, to crown all, they add the deepest humility and most unfeigned self-abasement to the most correct course of conduct: a course of conduct which, though a Christian never thinks himself at liberty to neglect, he never feels himself permitted or disposed to be proud of.'

'Well, well, Doctor,' said Mr. Flam, 'I never denied the truth of Christianity, as Carlton formerly did. 'Tis the religion of the country by law established. And I often go to church, because that too is established by law, for which you know I have a great veneration. 'Tis the religion of my ancestors, I like it for that too.'

'But, Sir,' said the Doctor, 'would you not show your veneration for the church more fully

if you attended it twice, instead of once? And your veneration for the law, if instead of going sometimes, you went every Sunday, which you know both the law of God and man enjoins.'

'Why, unluckily,' returned Mr. Flam, 'the hour of service interferes with that of dinner.'

'Sir,' said Dr. Barlow, smiling, 'hours are so altered, that I believe if the church were to new model the calender, she would say that dinners ought to be placed among the *moveable feasts*. An hour earlier or later would accommodate the difference, liberate your servants, and enable you to do a thing right in itself, and beneficial in its example.'

Mr. Flam not being prepared with an answer went on with his confession of faith.—'Doctor,' said he, 'I am a better Christian than you think. I take it for granted that the Bible is true, for I have heard many men say who examine for themselves, which I cannot say I ever had time or inclination to do, that no opposer has ever yet refuted the scripture account of miracles and prophecies. So if you don't call this being a good Christian, I don't know what is.'

Dr. Barlow replied, 'nothing can be better as far as it goes. But allow me to say, that there is another kind of evidence of the truth of our religion, which is peculiar to the real Christian. I mean that evidence of the truth which arises from his individual conviction of the efficacy of Christianity in remedying the disorders of his own nature. He who has had his own temper improved, his evil propensities subdued, and his whole character formed anew, by being cast into the mould of Christianity, will have little doubt of the truth of a religion which has produced such obvious effects in himself.—The truths for which his reason pleads, and in which his understanding, after much examination, is able to rest, having had a purifying influence on his heart, become established principles, producing in him at the same time holiness of life and peace of conscience. The stronger evidence a man has of his own internal improvement, the stronger will be his conviction of the truth of the religion he professes.'

'There are worse men than I am, Doctor,' said Mr. Flam, rather seriously.

'Sir,' replied he, 'I heartily wish every gentleman had your good qualities. But as we shall be judged positively and not comparatively, as our characters will be finally decided upon, not by our superiority to other men, nor merely by our inferiority to the divine rule, but by our departure from it, I wish you would begin to square your life by that rule now; which, in order that you may do, you should begin to study it. While we live in a total neglect of the Bible, we must not talk of our deficiencies, our failings, our imperfections, as if these alone stood between us and the mercy of God. That indeed is the language and the state of the devout Christian. Stronger terms must be used to express the alienation of heart of those, who, living in the avowed neglect of Scripture, may be said, forgive me, Sir, 'to live without God in the world.' Ignorance is no plea in a gentleman. In a land of light and knowledge ignorance itself is a sin.'

Here Dr. Barlow being silent, and Mr. Flam not being prepared to answer, Mr. Stanley said, 'That the pure and virtuous dispositions, which arise out of a sincere belief of Christianity, are not more frequently seen in persons professing themselves to be Christians, is, unhappily, one of the strongest arguments against us that can be urged by unbelievers. Instances, however, occur, which are too plain to be denied, of individuals who, having been led by divine grace cordially to receive Christianity, have exhibited in their conduct a very striking proof of its excellence; and among these are some who, like our friend Carlton, had previously led very corrupt lives. The ordinary class of Christians, who indeed scarcely deserve the name, as well as sceptics and unbelievers, would do well to mark the lives of the truly religious, and to consider them as furnishing a proof which will come powerfully in aid of that body of testimony with which Christianity is intrenched on all sides. And these observers should remember, that though they themselves may not yet possess the best evidence in favour of Christianity, which arises from an inward sense of its purifying nature, they may nevertheless aspire after it; and those who have any remaining doubts should encourage themselves with the hope, that if they fully yield themselves to the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, a salutary change will in time be effected in their own hearts, which will furnish them with irresistible evidence of its truth.'

I could easily perceive, that though Mr. Stanley and Dr. Barlow entertained small hopes of the beneficial effect of their discourse on the person to whom it was directed; yet they prolonged it with an eye to Sir John Belfield, who sat profoundly attentive, and encouraged them by his looks.

As to Mr. Flam, it was amusing to observe the variety of his motions, gestures, and contortions, and the pains he took to appear easy and indifferent, and even victorious; sometimes fixing the end of his whip on the floor, and whirling it round at full speed: then working it into his boot: then making up his mouth for a whistle, but stopping short to avoid being guilty of the incivility of interruption.

At length with the same invincible good nature, and with the same pitiable insensibility to his own state, he arose to take leave. He shook us all by the hand, Dr. Barlow twice, saying, 'Doctor, I don't think the worse of you for your plain speaking. He is a knave or a fool that is angry with a good man for doing his duty. 'Tis my fault if I don't take his advice: but 'tis his fault if he does not give it. Parsons are paid for it, and ought not to be mealy mouthed when there is a proper opening, such as poor Tyrrel's case gave you. I challenged *you*. I should perhaps have been angry if you had challenged *me*. It makes all the difference in the event of a duel which is the challenger. As to myself, it is time enough for me to think of the things you recommend. Thank God, I am in excellent good health and spirits, and am not yet quite fifty. 'There is a time for all things.' Even the Bible allows that.'

The Doctor shook his head at this sad misapplication of the text. Mr. Flam went away,

pressing us all to dine with him next day; he had killed a fine buck, and he assured Dr. Barlow that he should have the best port in his cellar. The Doctor pleaded want of time, and the rest of the party could not afford a day, out of the few which remained to us;' but we promised to call on him. He nodded kindly at Dr. Barlow, saying, 'well, Doctor, as you won't come to the buck, one of his haunches shall come to you; so tell Madam to expect it.

As soon as he had left the room, we all joined in lamenting that the blessings of health should ever be produced as arguments for neglecting to secure those blessings which have eternity for their object.

'Unhappy man!' said Dr. Barlow, 'little does he think that he is, if possible, more the object of my compassion than poor Mr. Tyrrel. Tyrrel, it is true, is lying on a sick, probably on a dying bed. His body is in torture. His mind is in anguish. He has to look back on a life, the retrospect of which can afford him no ray of comfort. But he *knows* his misery. The hand of God is upon him. His proud heart is brought low. His self-confidence is subdued. His high imaginations are cast down. His abasement of soul, as far as I can judge, is sincere. He abhors himself in dust and ashes. He sees death at hand. He feels that the sting of death is sin. All subterfuge is at an end. He is at last seeking the only refuge of penitent sinners, I trust, on right grounds. His state is indeed perilous in the extreme: yet awful as it is, he *knows* it. He will not open his eyes on the eternal world in a state of delusion. But what shall awaken poor Mr. Flam from his dream of security? His high health, his unbroken spirits, his prosperous circumstances and various blessings, are so many snares to him. He thinks that 'to-morrow shall be as this day, and still more abundant. Even the wretched situation of his dying friend, though it awakens compassion, awakens not compunction. Nay, it affords matter of triumph rather than of humiliation. He feeds his vanity with compassions from which he contrives to extract comfort. His own offences being of a different kind, instead of lamenting them, he glories in being free from those which belong to an opposite cast of character. Satisfied that he has not the vices of Tyrrel, he never once reflects on his own unrepented sins. Even his good qualities increase his danger. He wraps himself up in that constitutional good nature, which being partly founded on vanity and self-approbation, strengthens his delusion, and hardens him against reproof.'

CHAP. XLVII.

In conversing with Mr. Stanley on my happy prospects, and my future plans; after having referred all concerns of a pecuniary nature to be settled between him and Sir John Belfield, I ventured to entreat that he would crown his goodness, and my happiness, by allowing me to solicit his daughter for an early day.

Mr. Stanley said, the term *early* was relative; but he was afraid that he should hardly consent to what I might consider even as a late one. 'In parting with such a child as Lucilla,' added he, 'some weaning time must be allowed to the tenderest of mothers. The most promising marriage, and surely none can promise more happiness than that to which we are looking, is a heavy trial to fond parents. To have trained a creature with anxious fondness, in hope of her repaying their solicitude hereafter by the charms of her society, and then as soon as she becomes capable of being a friend and companion to lose her for ever, is such a trial that I sometimes wonder at the seeming impatience of parents to get rid of a treasure, of which they best know the value. The sadness which attends the consummation even of our dearest hopes on these occasions, is one striking instance of that *Vanity of human wishes*, on which Juvenal and Johnson have so beautifully expatiated.

'A little delay indeed I shall require, from motives of prudence as well as fondness. Lucilla will not be nineteen these three months and more. You will not, I trust, think me unreasonable if I say, that neither her mother nor myself can consent to part with her before that period.'

'Three months!' exclaimed I, with more vehemence than politeness. 'Three months! It is impossible.'

'It is very possible,' said he, smiling, 'that you can wait, and very certain that we shall not consent sooner.'

'Have you any doubts, Sir,' said I, 'have you any objections which I can remove, and which, being removed, may abridge this long probation?'

'None,' said he, kindly. 'But I consider even nineteen as a very early age: too early indeed, were not my mind so completely at rest about you, on the grand points of religion, morals, and temper, that delay could, I trust, afford me no additional security. You will, however, my dear Charles, find so much occupation in preparing your affairs, and your mind, for so important a change, that you will not find the time of absence so irksome as you fancy.

'Absence, Sir,' replied I. 'What then, do you intend to banish me?'

'No,' replied he, smiling again. 'But I intended to send you *home*. A sentence, indeed, which in this dissipated age is thought the worst sort of exile. You have now been absent six or seven months. This absence has been hitherto justifiable. It is time to return to your affairs, to your duties. Both the one and the other always slide into some disorder by a too long separation from the place of their legitimate exercise. Your steward will want inspection, your tenants may want redress, your poor always want assistance.'

Seeing me look irresolute, 'I must, I find,' added he, with the kindest look and voice, 'be compelled to the inhospitable necessity of turning you out of doors.'

'Live without Lucilla three months!' said I. 'Allow me, Sir, at least to remain a few weeks longer at the Grove.'

'Love is a bad calculator,' replied Mr. Stanley. 'I believe he never learnt arithmetic

Don't you know that as you are enjoined a three months banishment, that the sooner you go, the sooner you will return? And that, however long your stay now is, your three months' absence will still remain to be accomplished. To speak seriously; Lucilla's sense of propriety, as well as that of Mrs. Stanley, will not permit you to remain much longer under the same roof, now that the motive will become so notorious. Besides that an act of self-denial is a good principle to set out upon, business and duties will fill up your active hours, and an intercourse of letters with her you so reluctantly quit, will not only give an interest to your leisure, but put you both still more completely in possession of each other's character.'

'I will set out to-morrow, Sir,' said I, earnestly, 'in order to begin to hasten the day of my return.'

'Now you are as much too precipitate on the other side,' replied he. 'A few days, I think, may be permitted, without any offence to Lucilla's delicacy. This even her mother pleads for.'

'With what excellence will this blessed union give me an alliance!' replied I; 'I will go directly and thank Mrs. Stanley for this goodness.'

I found Mrs. Stanley and her daughter together, with whom I had a long and interesting conversation. They took no small pains to convince my judgment, that my departure was perfectly proper. My will however continued rebellious. But as I had been long trained to the habit of submitting my will to my reason, I acquiesced, though not without murmuring, and as they told me with very bad grace.

I informed Mrs. Stanley of an intimation I had received from Sir George Aston of his attachment to Phœbe, and of his mother's warm approbation to his choice, adding that he alleged her extreme youth, as the ground of his deferring to express his hope, that his plea might one day be received with favour.

'He forgot to allege his own youth,' replied she, 'which is a reason almost equally cogent.'

Miss Stanley and I agreed that a connexion more desirable in all respects could not be expected.

'When I assure you,' replied Mrs. Stanley, 'that I am quite of your opinion, you will think me inconsistent if I add that I earnestly hope such a proposal will not be made by Sir George, lest his precipitancy should hinder the future accomplishment of a wish, which I may be allowed remotely to indulge.'

'What objection,' said I, 'can Mr. Stanley possibly make to such a proposal, except that his daughter is too young?'

'I see,' replied she, 'that you do not yet completely know Mr. Stanley; or rather you do not know all that he has done for the Aston family. His services have been very important, not only in that grand point which you and I think the most momentous; but he has also very successfully exerted himself in settling Lady Aston's worldly affairs, which were in the utmost disorder. The large estate, which had suffered by her own ignorance of business, and the dishonesty of a steward, he has not only enabled her to clear, but put her in the way greatly to improve. This skill and kindness in worldly things so raised his credit in the eyes of the guardian, young Sir George's uncle, that he declared he should never again be so much afraid, of religious men; whom he had always understood to be without judgment, or kindness, or disinterestedness.

'Now,' added Mrs. Stanley, 'don't you perceive that not only the purity of Mr. Stanley's motives, but religion itself would suffer, should we be forward to promote this connexion? Will not this Mr. Aston say, that sinister designs influenced all this zeal and kindness, and that Sir George's estate was improved with an eye to his own daughter? It will be said that these religious people always know what they are about—that when they seem to be purely serving God, they are resolved not to serve him for nothing, but always keep their own interest in view. Should Sir George's inclination continue, and his principles stand the siege which the world will not fail to lay to a man of his fortune—some years hence, when he is complete master of his actions, his character formed, and his judgment ripened to direct his choice, so as to make it evident to the world, that it was not the effect of influence, this connexion is an event to which we should look forward with much pleasure.'

'Never,' exclaimed I, 'no not once, have I been disappointed in my expectation of consistency in Mr. Stanley's character. O, my beloved parents, how wise was your injunction that I should make *consistency the test of true piety!* It is thus that Christians should always keep the credit of religion in view, if they would promote its interests in the world.'

When I communicated to Miss Stanley my conversation with *her* father, and read over with her the letters of *mine*, how tenderly did she weep! How were my own feelings renewed! To be thus assured that she was selected for their son, by my deceased parents, seemed, to her pious mind, to shed a sacredness on our union. How did she venerate their virtues! How feelingly regret their loss!

Before I left the country, I did not omit a visit of civility to Mr. Flam. The young ladies, as Sir John predicted, had stept back into their natural character, and natural undress; though he was too severe when he added, that their hopes in assuming the other were not at an end.

They both asked me, if I was not moped to death at the Grove: the Stanley's, they said, were *good sort* of people, but quite *mauvais ton*, as every body must be who did not spend half the year in London. Miss Stanley was a fine girl enough, but knew nothing of the world, wanted manner, which two or three winters in town would give her. 'Better as she is,' interrupted Mr. Flam, 'better as she is. She is a pattern daughter, and will make a pattern wife. *Her* mother has no care nor trouble; I wish I could say as much of all mothers. I never saw a bad humour, or a bad dinner in the house. She is always at home, always in spirits, and always in temper. She is cheerful as if she had no religion, and as useful as if she could not spell her own receipt book.'

I was affected with this generous tribute to my Lucilla's virtues: and when he wished me

joy, as he cordially shook me by the hand, I could not forbear saying to myself, why will not this good-natured man go to heaven?

I next paid a farewell visit to Mr. and Mrs. Carlton, and to the amiable family at Aston Hall, and to Dr. Barlow. How rich has this excursion made me in valuable friendships; to say nothing of the inestimable connexion at the Grove! I did not forget to assure Dr. Barlow, that if any thing could add a value to the blessing which awaited me, it was, that his hand would consecrate it.

Through the good Doctor I received a message from Mr. Tyrrel, requesting me to make him a visit of charity before I quitted the neighbourhood. I instantly obeyed the summons. I found him totally changed in all respects, a body wasted by disease, a mind apparently full of contrition, and penetrated with that deep humility, in which he had been so eminently deficient.

He earnestly entreated my prayers, adding, 'though it is presumption in so unworthy a being as I am, to suppose his intercession may be heard, I will pray for a blessing on your happy prospects. A connexion with such a family is itself a blessing. Oh! that my nephew had been worthy of it! It is to recommend that poor youth to your friendship, that I invited you to this melancholy visit. I call him poor, because I have neglected to enrich his mind: but he will have too much of this world's goods. May he employ well what I have risked my soul to amass! Counsel him, dear Sir; admonish him. Recal to his mind his dying uncle. I would now give my whole estate, nay, I would live upon the alms I have refused, to purchase one more year, though spent in pain and misery, that I might prove the sincerity of my repentance. Be to Ned what my blessed Stanley would have been to me. But my pride repelled his kindness. I could not bear his superiority. I turned away my eyes from a model I could not imitate.' I now entreated him to spare himself, but after a few minutes pause he proceeded.

'As to Ned, I trust he is not ill-disposed, but I have neither furnished his mind for solitude nor fortified his heart for the world. I foolishly thought that to keep him ignorant was to keep him safe. I have provided for him the snare of a large fortune, without preparing him for the use of it. I fell into an error not uncommon, that of grudging the expenses of education to a relation for whom I designed my estate. I have thus fitted him for a companion to the vulgar, and a prey to the designing. I thought it sufficient to keep him from actual vice, without furnishing him with arguments to combat it, or with principles to abhor it.'

Here the poor man paused for want of breath. I was too much affected to speak.

At length he went on. 'I have made over to Dr. Barlow's son two thousand pounds for completing his education. I have also give two thousand pounds a-piece to the two elder daughters of Mr. Stanley in aid of their charities. I have made a deed of gift of this, and of a large sum for charitable purposes at the discretion of my executors. This I hoped would prove my sincerity more than a legacy, as it will be paid immediately. A refusal to accept it will greatly distress me. Ned still will have too much left, unless he employs it to better purposes than I have done.'

Though deeply moved, I hardly knew what to reply. I wished to give him comfort, but distrusted my own judgment as to the manner. I promised my best services to his nephew.

'Oh, good young man!' cried he, 'if ever you are tempted to forget God, as I did for above thirty years; or to mock him by an outward profession as I have lately done, think of me. Think of one who for the largest portion of his life, lived as if there were no God; and who, since he has made a profession of Christianity, deceived his own soul, no less by the religion he adopted, than by his former neglect of all religion. My delusion was this, I did not choose to be good, but I chose to be saved. It is no wonder then that I should be struck with a religion, which I hoped would free me from the discipline of moral rectitude, and yet deliver me from the punishment of having neglected it. Will God accept my present forced submission? Will he accept a penitence of which I may have no time to prove the sincerity? Tell me—You are a Christian.'

I was much distressed. I thought it neither modest nor prudent for me to give a decisive answer. He grasped my hand. 'Then,' said he, 'you think my case hopeless. You think the Almighty cannot forgive me. Thus pressed, I ventured to say, 'to doubt his will to pardon, and his power to save, would, as it appears to me, Sir, be a greater fault than any you have committed.'

'One great comfort is left,' replied he, 'the mercy I have abused is infinite. Tell Stanley I now believe with him, that if we pretend to trust in God, we must be governed by him; if we truly believe in him, we shall obey him; if we think he sent his Son to save sinners, we shall hate sin.'

I ventured to congratulate him on his frame of mind: and seeing him quite overcome, took leave of him with a heart deeply touched with this salutary scene. The family at the Grove were greatly moved with my description, and with the method poor Tyrrel had found out of eluding the refusal of his liberal-minded executors to accept of legacies.

The day fixed for my departure too soon arrived. I took a most affectionate leave of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, and a very tender one of Lucilla, who gratified my affection by the emotion she evidently felt, and my delicacy by the effort she made to conceal it. Phœbe wept outright. The children all hung about me, each presenting me some of her flowers, saying they had nothing else to give me; and assuring me that Rachel should be no loser by it. Little Celia was clamorous in her sorrow, when she saw me ascend the curricle, in which neither she nor Lucilla was to have a place. I took the sweet child up into the carriage, and placed her by me, and gently drove her through the park, at the gate of which I consigned her to the arms of her father, who had good-naturedly walked by the side of the carriage in order to carry her back. I drove off, enriched with his prayers

and blessings, which seemed to insure me protection.

Though this separation from all I loved threw a transient sadness around me, I had abundant matter for delightful reflection and pious gratitude. I experienced the truth of Phœbe's remark, that happiness is a serious thing. While pleasure manifests itself by extravagant gaiety, exuberant spirits, and overt acts, happiness retreats to its own proper region, the heart. There concentrating its feelings, it contemplates its treasures, meditates on its enjoyments and still more fondly on its hopes: counts up its mercies, and feels the consummation of them in looking to the fountain from whence they flow; feels every blessing immeasurably heightened by the heart-cheering reflection, that the most exquisite human pleasures are not the perfection of his nature, but only a gracious earnest, a bounteous pre-libation of that blessedness which is without measure, and shall be without end.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Before the Belfields had quitted us, it was stipulated that we should, with submission to the will of a higher power, all meet for six weeks every other summer at Stanley Grove, and pass a month together every intermediate year, either at the Priory, or at Beechwood.

I passed through London, and spent three days in Cavendish-square, my friends having kindly postponed their departure for the country on my account. Lady Belfield voluntarily undertook whatever was necessary for the internal decoration of the Priory; while Sir John took on himself the friendly office of arranging for me all preliminaries with Mr. Stanley, whose largeness of heart, and extreme disinterestedness, I knew I durst not trust, without some such check as I placed in the hand of our common friend.

As soon as all personal concerns were adjusted, Lady Belfield said, 'I have something to communicate, in which I am persuaded you will take a lively interest. On my return to town, I found, among my visiting tickets, several of Lady Melbury's. The porter told me she had called every day for the last week, and seemed very impatient for my return. Finding she was still in town, I went to her immediately. She was not at home, but came to me within an hour. She expressed great joy at seeing me. She looked more beautiful than ever, at least the blush of conscious shame, which mingled with her usual sweetness, rendered her more interesting.

'She was at a loss how to begin. With a perplexed air she said, 'Why did you stay so long? I have sadly wanted you. Where is Sir John? I have wanted counsellors—comforters—friends. I have never had a friend.'

'I was affected at an opening so unexpected. Sir John came in. This increased her confusion. At length, after the usual compliments, she thus addressed him: 'I am determined to conquer this false shame. There is not a worse symptom in human nature than that we blush to own what we have not been afraid to do. From you, Sir John, I heard the first remonstrance which ever reached my ears. You ought to be informed of its effect. You cannot have forgotten our conversation in my coach,* after we had quitted the scene which filled you with contempt for me, and me with anguish for the part I had acted. You reasonably supposed that my remorse would last no longer than the scene which inspired it. You left me alone. My lord dined abroad. I was abandoned to all the horrors of solitude. I wanted somebody to keep me from myself. Mrs. Stokes dying; her husband dead! the sweet flower-girl pining for want, and I the cause of all! The whole view presented such a complication of misery to my mind, and of guilt to my heart, as made me insupportable to myself.

'"It was Saturday. I was of course engaged to the opera. I was utterly unfit to go, but wanted courage to frame an excuse. Fortunately Lady Bell Finley, whom I had promised to chaperon, sent to excuse herself. This set my person at liberty, but left my mind upon the rack. Though I should have rejoiced in the company even of my own chambermaid, so much did I dread being left to my own thoughts, yet I resolved to let no one in that night. I had scarcely passed a single evening out of the giddy circle for several years. For the first time in my life I was driven to look into myself. I took a retrospect of my past conduct; a confused and imperfect one indeed. This review aggravated my distress. Still I pursued my distracting self-inquisition. Not for millions would I pass such another night!

'"I had done as wrong things before, but they had never been thus brought home to me. My extravagance must have made others suffer, but their sufferings had not been placed before my eyes. What was not seen, I had hoped might not be true. I had indeed heard distant reports of the consequences of my thoughtless expense, but they might be invented—they might be exaggerated. At the flower-maker's I *witnessed* the ruin I had made—I *saw* the fruits of my unfeeling vanity—I *beheld* the calamities I had caused. O how much mischief would such actual observations prevent! I was alone. I had no dependant to qualify the deed, no sycophant to divert my attention to more soothing objects. Though Sir John's honest expostulation had touched me to the quick; yet I confess, had I found any of my coterie at home, had I gone to the opera, had a joyous supper succeeded, all together would have quite obliterated the late mortifying scene. I should, as I have often done before, have lost all sense of the Stoke's misery, and of my own crime."

'Here,' pursued Lady Belfield, 'the sweet creature looked so contrite, that Sir John and I were both deeply affected.'

'"You are not accustomed, Sir John," resumed she, with a faint smile, "to the office of a confessor, nor I to that of a penitent. But I make it a test to myself of my own sincerity to tell you the whole truth.

'"I wandered from room to room, fancying

* See ch. 12.

I should be more at ease in any other than that in which I was. I envied the starving tenant of the meanest garret. I envied Mrs. Stokes herself. Both might have pitied the pangs which rent my heart, as I roamed through the decorated apartments of our spacious house. In the gayest part of London I felt the dreariness of a desert. Surrounded with magnificence, I endured a sense of want and wo, of which a blameless beggar can form no idea.

'"I went into the library; I took up a book which my lord had left on the table. It was a translation from a Roman classic. I opened it at the speech of the tragedian to Pompey: "*The time will come that thou shalt mourn deeply, because thou didst not mourn sooner!*" I was struck to the heart. "Shall a pagan," said I, "thus forcibly reprove me; and shall I neglect to search for truth at the fountain?

'"I knew my lord would not come home from his club till the morning. The struggle in my soul between principle and pride was severe; but after a bitter conflict, I resolved to employ the night in writing him a long letter. In it I ingenuously confessed the whole state of my mind, and what had occasioned it. I implored his permission for my setting out next morning for Melbury Castle. I entreated him to prevail on his excellent aunt, Lady Jane, whom I had so shamefully slighted, to accompany me. I knew she was a character of that singular class, who would be glad to revenge herself for my ill-treatment by doing me a service. Her company would be at once a pledge to my lord of the purity of my intentions, and to myself a security against falling into worse society. I assured him that I had no safeguard but in flight. An additional reason which I alleged for my absence was, that as I had promised to give a grand masquerade in a fortnight, the evading this expense would nearly enable me to discharge the debt which sat so heavy on my conscience.

'"I received a note from him as soon as he came home. With his usual complaisance, he complied with my request. With his usual nonchalance, he neither troubled me with his reproaches, nor comforted me with approbation.

'"As he knew that Lady Jane usually rose about the hour he came home from St. James's street, he obligingly went to her at once. I had not been in bed. He came to my dressing-room, and informed me that his aunt had consented at the first word. I expressed my gratitude to them both, saying, that I was ready to set out that very day."

'"You must wait till to-morrow," said he. "There is no accounting for the oddities of some people. Lady Jane told me she could not possibly travel on a Sunday. I wondered where was the impossibility. Sunday, I assured her, was the only day for travelling in comfort, as the road was not obstructed by wagons and carts. She replied, with a gravity which made me laugh, 'that she should be ashamed to think that a person of her rank and education should be indebted, for her being able to trample with more convenience on a divine law, to the piety of the vulgar who durst not violate it.' 'Did you ever hear any thing so whimsical, Matilda?' I said nothing, but my heart smote me. Never will I repeat this offence.

'"On the Monday we set out, I had kept close the preceding day, under pretence of illness. This I also assigned as an excuse in the cards to my invited guests, pleading the necessity of going into the country for change of air. Shall I own I dreaded being shut up in a barouche, and still more in the lonely castle, with Lady Jane? I looked for nothing every moment but 'the thorns and briars of reproof.' But I soon found that the woman whom I had quizzed as a methodist, was a most entertaining companion. Instead of austerity in her looks, and reproach in her language, I found nothing but kindness and affection, but vivacity and elegance. While she soothed my sorrows, she strengthened my better purposes. Her conversation gradually revived in my mind tastes and principles which had been early sown in it, but which the world seemed completely to have eradicated.

'"In the neighbourhood of the Castle, Lady Jane carried me to visit the abodes of poverty and sickness. I envied her large but discriminating liberality, and the means she possessed of gratifying it, while I shed tears at the remembrance of my own squandered thousands. I had never been hard-hearted, but I had always given to importunity rather than to want, or merit. I blushed, that while I had been absurdly profuse to cases of which I knew nothing, my own village had been perishing with a contagious sickness.

'"While I amused myself with drawing, my aunt often read to me some rationally entertaining book, occasionally introducing religious reading and discourse, with a wisdom and moderation which increased the effect of both. Knowing my natural levity, and wretched habits, she generally waited till the proposal came from myself. At first when I suggested it, it was to please her, at length I began to find a degree of pleasure in it myself.

'"You will say I have not quite lost my romance. A thought struck me, that the first use I made of my pencil, should serve to perpetuate at least one of my offences. You know I do not execute portraits badly. With a little aid from fancy, which I thought made it allowable to bring separate circumstances into one piece, I composed a picture. It consisted of a detached figure in the back ground of poor Stokes, seen through the grate of his prison on a bed of straw; and a group, composed of his wife in the act of expiring, Fanny bending over a wreath of roses, withered with the tears she was shedding, and myself in the horrors in which you saw me,

Spectatress of the mischief I had made.

'"Wherever I go this picture shall always be my companion. It hangs in my closet, my dear friends,' added she, with a look of infinite sweetness, 'whenever I am tempted to contract a debt, or to give in to any act of vanity or dissipation which may lead to debt, if after having looked on this picture I can pursue the project, renounce me, cast me off for ever!

'"You know Lady Jane's vein of humour. One day as we were conversing together, I confessed that, at the very time I was the object of general notice, and my gaiety the theme of general envy, I had never known happiness. 'I do not wonder at it,' said she. 'Those who greedily pursue admiration, would be ashamed to sit down with so quiet a thing as happiness.' 'My dear Lady Jane,' said I, 'correct me, counsel me, instruct me, you have been too lenient, too forbearing.' 'Well,' said she, with a cheerful tone, 'as you appoint me your physician, as you disclose your case, and ask relief, I will give you a prescription, which, though the simplest thing in the world, will, I am certain, go a great way towards curing you. As you are barely six and twenty, your disease I trust is not inveterate. If you will be an obedient patient, I will answer for your recovery.'

'"I assured her of my willing adoption of any remedy she might prescribe, as I was certain she would consider my weakness, and adapt her treatment, not so much to what my case absolutely required, as to what my strength was able to bear.

'"Well then,' said she—'But pray observe I am no quack. I do not undertake to restore you instantaneously. Though my medicine will work surely, it will work slowly. You know,' added she, smiling, 'the success of all alteratives depends on the punctuality with which they are taken, and the constancy with which they are followed up. Mine must be taken two or three times a day, in small quantities at first, the dose to be enlarged as you are able to bear it. I can safely assert, with the advertising doctors, that it may be used full or fasting, in all weathers, and all seasons; but I cannot add with them that *it requires no confinement.*'

'"I grew impatient and begged she would come to the point. 'Softly, Matilda,' said she, 'softly, I must first look into my receipt-book, for fear I should mistake any of my ingredients. This book,' said she, opening it, 'though written by no Charlatan, contains a cure for all diseases. It exhibits not only general directions, but specified cases.' Turning over the leaves as she was speaking, she at length stopped, saying, 'here is your case, my dear, or rather your remedy.' She then read very deliberately—'COMMUNE WITH YOUR OWN HEART—AND IN YOUR CHAMBER—AND BE STILL.'

'"I now found her grand receipt-book was the Bible. I arose and embraced her. 'My dear aunt,' said I, 'do with me whatever you please. I will be all obedience. I pledge myself to take your alterative regularly, constantly. Do not spare me. Speak your whole mind.'

'"My dear Matilda,' said she, 'ever since your marriage, your life has been one continued opposition to your feelings. You have lived as much below your understanding as your principles. Your conduct has been a system of contradictions. You have believed in Christianity, and acted in direct violation of its precepts. You knew that there was a day of future reckoning, and yet neglected to prepare for it. With a heart full of tenderness, you have been guilty of repeated acts of cruelty. You have been faithful to your husband, without making him respectable or happy. You have been virtuous, without the reputation or the peace which belongs to virtue. You have been charitable without doing good, and affectionate without having ever made a friend. You have wasted those attentions on the worthless, which the worthy would have delighted to receive, and those talents on the frivolous, which would have been cherished by the enlightened. You have defeated the use of a fine understanding by the want of common prudence, and robbed society of the example of your good qualities by your total inability to resist and oppose. Inconsideration and vanity have been the joint cause of your malady. At your age, I trust it is not incurable. As you have caught it by keeping infected company, there is no possible mode of cure, but by avoiding the contagious air they breathe. You have performed your quarantine with admirable patience. Beware my dearest neice, of returning to the scene where the plague rages, till your antidote has taken its full effect.'

'"I will *never* return to it, my dear Lady Jane,' cried I, throwing myself into her arms. 'I do not mean that I will never return to town. My duty to my lord requires me to be where he is, or where he wishes me to be. My residence will be the same, but my society will be changed.'

'"You please me entirely,' replied she.—'In resorting to religion, take care that you do not dishonour it. Never plead your piety to God as an apology for your neglect of the relative duties. If the one is soundly adopted the other will be correctly performed.—There are those who would delight to throw such a stigma on real Christianity, as to be able to report that it had extinguished your affections, and soured your temper. Disappoint them, my sweet niece; while you serve your Maker more fervently, you must be still more patient with your husband. But while you bear with his faults, take care you do not connive at them. If you are in earnest, you must expect some trials. He who prepares these trials for you will support you under them, will carry you through them, will make them instruments of his glory, and of your own eternal happiness.'

'"Lord Melbury's complaisance to my wishes,' replied I, 'has been unbounded.—As he never controlled my actions, when they required control, I trust he will be equally indulgent now they will be less censurable. Alas! we have too little interfered with each other's concerns—we have lived too much asunder—who knows but I may recall him?' My tears would not let me go on—nor will they now,' added she, wiping her fine eyes.

'Sir John and I were too much touched to attempt to answer her; at length she proceeded.

'"By adhering to Lady Jane's directions, I have begun to get acquainted with my own heart. Little did I suspect the evil that was in it. Yet I am led to believe that the incessant whirl in which I have lived, my total want of leisure for reflection, my excessive vanity, and complete inconsiderateness, are of themselves causes adequate to any effects which the grossest vices would have produced.

'"Last week my lord made us a visit at the

Castle. I gave him a warm reception; but he seemed rather surprised at the cold one which I gave to a large cargo of new French novels and German plays, which he had been so good as to bring me. I did not venture to tell him that I had changed my course of study. Lady Jane charged me to avoid giving him the least disgust by any unusual gravity in my looks or severity in my conversation. I exerted myself to such good purpose, that he declared he wanted neither cards nor company. I tried to let him see, by my change of habits, rather than by dry documents, or cold remonstrances, the alteration which had taken place in my sentiments. He was pleased to see me blooming and cheerful. We walked together, we read together; we became lovers and companions. He told Lady Jane he never saw me so pleasant. He did not know I was so agreeable a woman, and was glad he had had this opportunity of getting acquainted with me. As he has great expectations from her, he was delighted at the friendship which subsisted between us.

'"He brought us up to town. As it was now empty, the terrors of the masquerade no longer hung over me, and I cheerfully complied with his wishes. I drove immediately to Mrs. Stokes's with such a portion of my debt, as my retirement had enabled me to save. I feasted all the way on the joy I should have in surprising her with this two hundred pounds. How severe, but how just was my punishment, when on knocking at the door I found that she had been dead these two months! No one could tell me what was become of her daughter. This shock operated almost as powerfully on my feelings as the first had done. But if it augmented my self-reproach, it confirmed my good resolutions. My present concern is, how to discover the sweet girl whom, alas, I have helped to deprive of both her parents."

'Here I interrupted her,' continued Lady Belfield, saying, 'You have not far to seek, Fanny Stokes is in this house. She is appointed governess to our children.'

'Poor Lady Melbury's joy was excessive at this intelligence, and she proceeded: "That a too sudden return to the world might not weaken my better purposes, I was preparing to request my lord's permission to go back to the castle, when he prevented me by telling me that he had an earnest desire to make a visit to the brave patriots in Spain, and to pass the winter among them, but feared he must give it up, as the state of the continent rendered it impossible for me to accompany him.

'"This filled my heart with joy. I encouraged him to make a voyage, assured him I would live under Lady Jane's observation, and that I would pass the whole winter in the country."

'"Then you shall pass it with us at Beechwood, my dear Lady Melbury," cried Sir John and I, both at once, "we will strengthen each other in every virtuous purpose. We shall rejoice in Lady Jane's company."

'She joyfully accepted the proposal, not doubting her Lord's consent; and kindly said, that she should be doubly happy in a society, at once so rational and so elegant.

'It was settled that she should spend with us the three months that Fanny Stokes and little Caroline are to pass at Stanley Grove. She desired to see Fanny, to whom she behaved with great tenderness. She paid her the two hundred pounds, assuring her she had no doubt of being able to discharge the whole debt in the spring.

'I received a note from her the next day, informing me of her lord's cheerful concurrence, as well as that of Lady Jane. She added, that when she went up to dress she had found on her toilette her diamond necklace, which her dear aunt had redeemed and restored to her, as a proof of her confidence and affection. As Lady Melbury has for ever abolished her coterie, I have the most sanguine hope of her preseverance. All her promises would have gone for nothing, without this practical pledge of her sincerity.'

When Lady Belfield had finished her little tale, I expressed, in the strongest terms, the delight I felt at the happy change in this charming woman. I could not forbear observing to Sir John, that as Lady Melbury had been the 'glass of fashion,' while her conduct was wrong, I hoped she would not lose all her influence by its becoming right. I added, with a smile, 'in that case, I shall rejoice to see the fine ladies turn their talent for drawing to the same moral account with this fair penitent. Such a record of their faults as she has had the courage to make of hers, hanging in their closets, and perpetually staring them in the face, would be no unlikely means to prevent a repetition, especially if the picture is to be visible as the fault had been.'

CHAP. XLIX.

The next morning I resumed my journey northwards, and on the fourth day I reached the seat of my ancestors. The distant view of the Priory excited strong but mingled emotions in my bosom. The tender sorrow for the loss of the beloved society I had once enjoyed under its roof, was a salutary check to the abundant joy arising from the anticipation of the blessings which awaited me there. My mind was divided between the two conflicting sentiments, that I was soon to be in possession of every material for the highest happiness, and that the highest happiness is short! May I ever live under the influence of that act of devout gratitude, in which, as soon as I entered the house, I dedicated the whole of my future life to its divine Author, solemnly consecrating to his service, my time, my talents, my fortune; all I am and all I have!

I next wrote to Lucilla, with whom I continued to maintain a regular and animated correspondence. Her letters gratify my taste, and delight my heart, while they excite me to every thing that is good. This interchange of sentiment sheds a ray of brightness on a separation which every day is diminishing.

Mr. Stanley also has the goodness to write to me frequently. In one of my letters to him, I ventured to ask him how he had managed to produce in his daughter such complete satisfac-

tion in his sober and correct habits of life; adding, that her conformity was so cheerful that it did not look so much like acquiescence as choice.

I received from Mr. Stanley the answer which follows.

Stanley Grove, Sept. 1808.

'My dear Charles,

'As I wish to put you in possession of whatever relates to the mind of Lucilla, I will devote this letter to answer your inquiries respecting her cheerful conformity to what you call our "sober habits of life;" and her indifference to those pleasures which are usually thought to constitute the sole happiness of young women of a certain rank.

Mrs. Stanley and I are not so unacquainted with human nature, as to have pretended to impose on her understanding, by attempting to breed her up in entire ignorance of the world, or in perfect seclusion from it. She often accompanied us to town for a short time. The occasional sight of London, and the frequent enjoyment of the best society, dissipated the illusion of fancy. The bright colours with which young imagination, inflamed by ignorance, report, and curiosity, invests unknown and distant objects, faded under actual observation. Complete ignorance and complete seclusion form no security from the dangers incident to the world, or for correct conduct at a distance from it. Ignorance may be the safety of an idiot, and seclusion the security of a nun. Christian parents should act on a more large and liberal principle, or what is the use of observation and experience? The French women of fashion, under the old regime, were bred in convents, and what women were ever more licentious than many of them, as soon as marriage had set them at liberty?

'I am persuaded that the best-intended formation of character, if formed on ignorance and deceit, will never answer. As to Lucilla, we have never attempted to blind her judgment. We have never thought it necessary to leave her understanding out of the question, while we were forming her heart. We have never told her that the world is a scene absolutely destitute of pleasure: we have never assured her that there is no amusement in the diversion which we disapprove. Even if this assurance had not been deceitful, it would have been vain and fruitless. We cannot totally separate her from the society of those who frequent them, and whom she would hear speak of them with rapture.

'We went upon other grounds. We accustomed her to reflect that she was an intellectual creature; that she was an immortal creature; that she was a Christian.—That to an intellectual being, diversions must always be subordinate to the exercise of the mental faculties; that to an immortal being, born to higher hopes than enjoyments, the exercise of the mental faculties must be subservient to religious duties. That in the practice of a Christian, self-denial is the turning point, the specific distinction. That as to many of the pleasures which the world pursues, Christianity requires her votaries to live above the temptations which they hold out. She requires it the more especially, because Christians in our time, not being called upon to make great and trying sacrifices, of life, of fortune, and liberty; and having but comparatively small occasions to evidence their sincerity, should the more cheerfully make the petty but daily renunciation of those pleasures which are the very element in which worldly people exist.

'We have not misled her by unfair and flattering representations of the Christian life. We have not, with a view to allure her to embrace it on false pretences, taught her that when religion is once rooted in the heart, the remainder of life is uninterrupted peace and unbroken delight; that all shall be perpetually smooth hereafter, because it is smooth at present. This would be as unfair as to show a raw recruit the splendours of a parade-day, and tell him it was actual service. We have not made her believe that the established Christian has no troubles to expect, no vexations to fear, no storms to encounter. We have not attempted to cheat her into religion, by concealing its difficulties, its trials, no, nor its unpopularity.

'We have been always aware, that to have enforced the most exalted Christian principles, together with the necessity of a corresponding practice, ever so often and so strongly, would have been worse than foolish, had we been impressing these truths one part of the day, and had, on the other part, been living ourselves in the actual enjoyment of the very things against which we were guarding her. My dear Charles, if we would talk to young people with effect, we must, by the habits of which we set them the example, dispose them to listen, or our documents will be something worse than fruitless. It is really hard upon poor girls to be tantalized with religious lectures, while they are at the same time tempted to every thing against which they are warned; while the whole bent and bias of the family practice are diametrically opposite to the principles inculcated.

'In our own case I think I may venture to affirm, that the plan has answered. We endeavoured to establish a principle of right, instead of unprofitable invective against what was wrong. Perhaps there can scarcely be found a religious family in which so few anathemas have been denounced against this or that specific diversion, as in ours. We aimed to take another road. The turn of mind, the tendency of the employment, the force of the practice, the bent of the conversation, the spirit of the amusement, have all leaned to the contrary direction, till the habits are gradually worked into a kind of nature. It would be cruel to condemn a creature to a retired life without qualifying her for retirement: next to religion, nothing can possibly do this but mental cultivation who are above the exercise of vulgar employments. The girl who possesses only the worldly acquirements—the singer and the dancer—when condemned to retirement, may reasonably exclaim with Milton's Adam, when looking at the constellations,

> Why all night long shine these?
> Wherefore, if none *behold*.

'Now the woman who derives her principles from the Bible, and her amusements from intellectual sources, from the beauties of nature, and from active employment and exercise, will

not pant for *beholders*. She is no clamorous beggar for the extorted alms of admiration. She lives on her own stock. Her resources are within herself. She possesses the truest independence. She does not wait for the opinion of the world, to know if she is right; nor for the applause of the world, to know if she is happy.

'Too many religious people fancy that the infectious air of the world is confined to the ball-room, or the play-house, and that when you have escaped from these, you are got out of the reach of its contagion. But the contagion follows wherever there is a human heart left to its own natural impulse. And though I allow that places and circumstances greatly contribute to augment or diminish the evil; and that a prudent Christian will always avoid an atmosphere which he thinks not quite wholesome; yet, whoever lives in the close examination of his own heart, will still find some of the morbid mischief clinging to it, which will require constant watching, whatever be his climate or his company.

'I have known pious persons, who would on no account allow their children to attend places of gay resort, who were yet little solicitous to extinguish the spirit which these places are calculated to generate and nourish. This is rather a geographical than a moral distinction. It is thinking more of the place than of the temper. They restrain their persons, but are not careful to expel from their hearts the dispositions which excite the appetite, and form the very essence of danger. A young creature cannot be happy who spends her time at home in amusements destined for exhibition, while she is forbidden to be exhibited.

'But while we are teaching them that Christianity involves an heroic self-denial; that it requires some things to be done, and others to be sacrificed, at which mere people of the world revolt; that it directs us ro renounce some pursuits because they are wrong, and others because they are trifling—we should, at the same time, let them see and feel, that to a Christian the region of enjoyment is not so narrow and circumscribed, is not so barren and unproductive, nor the pleasures it produces so few and small, as the enemies of religion would insinuate. While early habits of self-denial are giving firmness to the character, strengthening the texture of the mind, and hardening it against ordinary temptations—the pleasures and the employments which we substitute in the stead of those we banish, must be such as tend to raise the taste, to invigorate the intellect, to exalt the nature, and enlarge the sphere of enjoyment, to give a tone to the mind, and an elevation to the sentiments, which shall really reduce to insignificance the pleasures that are prohibited.

'In our own instance I humbly trust, that through the divine blessing, perseverance has been its own reward. As to Lucilla, I firmly believe that right habits are now so rooted, and the relish of superior pleasures so established in her mind, that had she the whole range of human enjoyment at her command; had she no higher consideration, no fear of God, no obedience to her mother and me, which forbade the ordinary dissipations, she would voluntarily renounce them, from a full persuasion of their empty, worthless, unsatisfying nature, and from a superinduced taste for higher gratifications.

'I am as far from intending to represent my daughter as a faultless creature, as she herself is from wishing to be so represented. She is deeply conscious both of the corruption of her nature, and the deficiencies of her life. This consciousness I trust will continue to stimulate her vigilance, without which all religion will decline, and to maintain her humility, without which all religion is vain!

'My dear Charles! a rational scene of felicity lies open before you both. It is lawful to rejoice in the fair perspective, but it is safe to rejoice with trembling. Do not abandon yourself to the chimerical hope that life will be to you what it has never yet been to any man—a scene of unmingled delight. This life so bright in prospect, will have its sorrows. This life which at four and twenty seems to stretch itself to an indefinite length, will have an end. May its sorrows correct its illusions! May its close be the entrance on a life which shall have no sorrows and no end.

'I will not say how frequently we talk of you, nor how much we miss you. Need I tell you that the person who says least on the subject, is not the one who least feels your absence? She writes by this post.

'Adieu, my dear Charles! I am with great truth your attached friend, and hope before Christmas to subscribe myself your affectionate father,

'FRANCIS STANLEY'

* * * * *

Delightful hope! as Miss Stanley, when that blessed event takes place, will resign her name, I shall resume mine, and joyfully forever renounce that of

CŒLEBS.

MORAL SKETCHES

OF PREVAILING OPINIONS AND MANNERS,

FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC:

WITH REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER.

Let us make a stand on the ancient ways, and then look about us, and discover what is the straight and right way, and walk in it.—*Lord Bacon on Innovation.*

I know not which is the greater wonder, either that prayer, which is a duty so easy and facile, so ready and adapted to the powers and skill and opportunities of every man, should have so great effects and be productive of such mighty blessings; or that we should be so unwilling to use so easy an instrument of producing so much good.—*Bishop Jeremy Taylor.*

PREFACE.

It is with the sincerest satisfaction, and the most lively gratitude to God, that the writer of these pages is enabled to bear her feeble but heartfelt testimony, to the progress which religion has made, and is making, amongst us, especially in the higher, and even the highest ranks of society.

At a period, therefore, abounding and advancing in almost every kind of religious improvement, she may be thought by those who would be looking for congratulation rather than caution, to have imposed on herself an invidious task, in choosing to dwell less on the triumphs of Christianity, than on the dangers or the errors of some of its professors. Yet she is persuaded that they who have made the greatest proficiency in piety, will be the most ready to forgive the intimations, of which they stand in the least need.

It may, however, justly be said, that the writer might have found more appropriate objects of censure amongst the worldly and the irreligious, than in the more respectable classes whom she has taken the liberty to make the subject of animadversion. But the truth is, the thoughtless and the profligate have been so successively and so perseveringly attacked by far more powerful pens; have been so long assailed by the monitory maxims of the moralist, pelted by the missile weapons of the satirist, and chastised by the grave rebuke of the divine, that, with due deference, she turns over the hitherto incorrigible to stronger and more efficient hands; while she ventures to address her observations to other quarters, where there will be more hope of forgiveness, and less despair of success.

She does not therefore appeal to those who "hear not Moses and the Prophets," but rather to those, who, in some awful instances, misrepresent them. She presumes, with respect and diffidence, to expostulate with some, who, though exempt from palpable defects in practice, yet require to be reminded that speculative errors cannot be indulged without danger; and to intimate to others, that the practice may be faulty where there are no material errors in the creed. Doubtless indifference to religion will hereafter be more severely judged, than mistakes in it, especially if the latter be found to proceed from the head, as the other more apparently does from the heart.

The remarks in the early part of these Sketches, on the excess of continental intercourse, will probably be accused of blameable scrupulosity, and the writer be charged with unnecessary rigour. Yet what enlightened conscience will deny that some of the habits to which allusion is made, militate as much against the self-denying spirit of our religion as more ostensible faults. They would not, however, have been noticed, had they been confined to trifling and common characters; but the least error that grows into a habit, and that habit sanctioned by the countenance of the worthy and respectable, becomes more important than even the vices of ordinary men or frivolous women. In lamenting the probable injurious consequences to a large proportion of the myriads, who are still with unabated eagerness, crowding to a foreign shore, the author is fully persuaded that many amongst them carry out principles too deeply rooted, to be shaken by unprofitable intercourse, and morals too correct to be infected by the fascinations of pleasure. But who will deny that the countenance of those who escape the injury gives an authority to those who receive it? In this view, the wisest and most correct of our emigrants, may, by lending themselves to the practice, furnish in the result, an apology for things which they themselves disapprove, and thus their example may be pleaded, as favouring what they would be amongst the last to tolerate.

That long and frequent absences from our home, and especially from our country, are not favourable to the mind, is but too visible in that spirit of restlessness induced, by so many who have *repeatedly* made the experiment. For it is observable that the desire once indulged, instead of being cooled, is inflamed; inclination becomes voracity. Appetite has grown with indulgence. And is it not to be feared that the sober scenes of domestic, and especially of rural life, will continue to appear more and more insipid in proportion to the frequency with which they are deserted? Will not successive and protracted carnivals convert the quiet scenes of home enjoyment into what the poet calls "a lenten entertainment?"

Home is at once the scene of repose and of activity. A country gentleman of rank and fortune is the sun of a little system, the movements of which his influence controls. It is at home that he feels his real importance, his usefulness and his dignity. Each diminishes in proportion to the distance he wanders from his proper orbit. The old English gentry kept up the reverence and secured the attachment of their dependents by living among them. Personal affection was maintained by the presence of the benefactor. Subordination had a visible head. Whereas obedience to a master they do not see, savours too much of allegiance to a foreign power.

We know that the Roman hero who transgressed the boundaries of his own province by *once* crossing the Rubicon, changed the whole condition, circumstances, constitution and character

of his country. May not the reiterated passage of the Straits of Dover eventually produce moral changes not less important?

The mischiefs effected by these incessant migrations may, indeed, be slow, but they are progressive. Principles which would revolt at the idea of any sudden change, are melted down by the gradual relaxation of continued contact. Complacency in the soothing enjoyment creeps on by almost imperceptible advances. The revolution is not the less certain, because it is not acknowledged. The conscience, too, is quieted by the geographical anodyne—"I would not do in England what I think it no harm to do in Paris."

Might not a fair practical appeal be made to the different state of the feelings of many of our travellers, on witnessing the open violation of the sanctity of the *first* Sunday, and the *twentieth* repetition of the same abuse? Who can affirm, that familiarity has not gradually diminished the alarm, and in a good measure suppressed the indignation? Who will assert, that this succession of desecrated sabbaths has produced no alteration in the state of their feelings, except that of reconciling them to the practice. They, indeed, who had made such a proficiency in religion as to maintain an unabated sense of the evil, would be the least likely unnecessarily to expose their principles to such a risk.*

For the bold remarks on this dangerous and delicate subject, the culprit throws herself on the mercy, and the Anglicism of her readers; on the courtesy of those, whose kindness she hopes will not be forfeited, by her having shown herself too exclusively an English woman. Anxious, perhaps to a fault, for the welfare, the honour, the prosperity, the character of this Queen of Islands, she yet believes that there are to be found worse prejudices than those national attachments, which in her are irreclaimable.†

It is not, however, to be conceded, that the term *prejudice*, so frequently applied to these attachments, is, by this application, legitimately used. If prejudice, in its true definition, signifies prepossession, judgment formed beforehand, fondness adopted previously to knowledge, notions cherished without inquiry, opinions taken up, and acted upon without examination,—if these be its real significations, and what lexicographer will deny that they are? then how can this term be applied to the more enlightened Britons? How can it be applied to men who, independently of the natural fondness for the soil, and all the objects which endear it; who, in addition to this attachment, feel, acknowledge, and enjoy, in their native country, all the substantial blessings which make life worth living for; a constitution, the best that mortal man has ever yet devised; a religion, above the powers of man indeed to conceive, but reformed and carried to perfection by his agency, taught by the wisdom of God, led by the guidance of his word, and the direction of his Spirit. A system of religious liberty, which, while certain miscreants at home are labouring to destroy under the pretence of improving, some foreign countries are imitating, and all are envying. Institutions, which promise to convey the chief of these blessings to the remotest lands;—if all these assertions are true, let it be again asked, whether, if an intimate knowledge, and a long enjoyment of these blessings, should have produced a filial fondness for such a country, that attachment can be denominated *prejudice*, a word which, let it be repeated, was only meant to express blind zeal, neglected examination, and contented ignorance?

May not this growing attachment for foreign manners, by wearing out domestic attachments, create a powerful preponderance in the opposite scale? The English partialities being cured, may not those who shall have conquered them, become more satisfied with their acquired, than their former tastes; may they not fancy, that they are grown more candid, when perhaps, they are only become less conscientious? When the mind is softened down by pleasurable sensations, pleased with every thing about it, it becomes pleased with itself; begins to look back on its former scrupulous character with present triumph, rejoices in its enlargement from its previous narrowness congratulates itself on its acquired liberality, calls what was firmness, bigotry; and thus to the altered character, the strictness it carried abroad, appears rigour on its return home!

That the attraction may be inviting, and the temptation considerable, is readily allowed; but if once the rightness of an action should come to be determined by its pleasantness, an entirely new system of morals must be introduced amongst Christians: the question then would be no longer, what *ought* we to do, but what should we *like* to do? That the temptation is not irresistible, appears in the self-denial of those who continue to withstand it: many who have felt the desire have prudently deferred its gratification to a safer season; while others continue to doubt its *general* expediency.

That many among our innumerable travellers, have gone abroad on the reasonable ground of health, as well as for the necessary purposes of business, is not to be doubted. And who will deny that some men of great ability and high principle, have gone with the meritorious desire, of doing moral and religious good, in various directions; and that they have, in no inconsiderable degree effected it, or at least have opened a door for further improvement? On the other hand the disgraceful truth must not be concealed, that others have carried out more evil from home, than they found abroad.

It would be uncharitable and unchristian, to desire to maintain a spirit of hostility between

* Some friends of the writer, men of the first respectability, who during the late war commanded volunteer corps, have acknowledged to her, that when first called out to drill on Sundays, their religious feelings were most painfully wounded, but by long habit, it gradually became a matter of indifference to them.

† These prefatory apologies for the offences of a subsequent chapter, will, it is to be feared, remind the reader of the prudent sinner mentioned by Luther, who in going to purchase indulgences for the faults he had *already* committed, purchased another for a fault he *intended* to commit.

near neighbours; but when neighbours have been so frequently on the alert to find pretences for disagreement, and national safety has sometimes been endangered by the quarrels of individuals, will not good neighbourhood be more probably promoted by friendly dispositions and mutual good offices on the respective shores, than by obtrusive visits, which, if they were thoroughly liked, would doubtless be more frequently returned?

For is it not worthy of remark, that we not only refuse to imitate our continental neighbours, in the very point in which they are really respectable? *They stay at home.* Even if they do so with the same proud self-preference, which made ancient Rome call all the other nations of the world barbarians, it is at least an honest and a patriotic partiality. Would not the natives of our happy land who have less to gain, and more to lose, do well to follow their example in this honourable instance? *They* prudently augment the resources of their country in two ways, by spending their own money in their own land, with the additional profit of holding out to us those allurements, which cause ours to be spent there also.

O England! model to thy inward greatness,
Like little body with a mighty heart!
What might'st thou do that honour bids thee do,
Were all thy children kind and natural!
But see, thy fault France hath in thee found out.

SHAKSPEARE.

While the pen is in the hand of the writer, fresh intelligence is brought of conspiracies forming in different parts of the kingdom for its destruction. Can she, therefore, forbear repeating, that if her degenerate sons betray her, and her honourable sons desert her, her perils are indeed imminent?

At her advanced age the writer has little to hope from praise, or little to fear from censure, except as her views may have been in a right or wrong direction. She has felt that a renewed attention to growing errors is a duty on those who have the good of mankind at heart. The more nearly her time approaches for her leaving the world, there is a sense in which she feels herself more strongly interested in it; she means an increasing anxiety for its improvement; for its advance in all that is right in principle, and virtuous in action. And as the events and experience of every day convince her, that there is no true virtue that is not founded in religion, and no true religion which is not maintained by PRAYER, she hopes to be forgiven, if with declining years and faculties, yet with increasing earnestness, from increasing conviction of its value, she once more ventures to impress this last, important topic, on their attention.

If then she has enlarged even to diffuseness on the subject of prayer, it is because she is fervently desirous to suggest it, as the surest counteractive of those many abberrations of heart and practice but too visible amongst us. In some former publications, however, she had expatiated so largely on this inexhaustible topic, that, in order to avoid repetition, she has chiefly limited her present observations on prayer to the errors which may prevent its efficacy, together with the allusions to certain classes of character in whom these errors most abound.

In taking her final leave of her readers, may she be allowed to express her gratitude for their long unwearied indulgence; for a patience which the too frequent demands on it could not exhaust; for their candour in forgiving her bold remonstrances; for their kindness in bearing with her faults in consideration of her desire to be useful; and for extending to one who had nothing to offer but right intentions, that favour to which merit might have put in a fairer claim.

Barley-Wood, July 24th, 1819.

SKETCHES OF FOREIGN MANNERS.

Foreign Associations.

WE had fervently hoped, during a war unparalleled in duration and severity, that if ever the blessing of peace should be restored, all would be well again: we had hoped, that at least we should be brought back to our previous situation with that improvement in humility and gratitude, which the remembrance of past sufferings, and recent deliverance from those sufferings, would seem naturally to produce. If our pleasant feelings in such a prospective event were shaded at all, it was simply by the irrepairable and individual loss of a father, son, or brother, which almost every family, of every rank, had sustained. Peace was at length providentially granted to our arms and to our prayers; but all the blessings we had anticipated did not return in her train:

Ease still recants
Vows made in pain, as violent and void.

Were it not almost doubtful whether in some respects the change may have proved a benefit, if it should be found to be the choice between the two evils, the waste of human lives, or the decay of moral principles? Some scrupulous persons may even think it requires no very correct arithmetic to determine on the comparative value of perishable lives and immortal souls.

What then was the first use we made of a benefit so earnestly implored,—a blessing which we fondly flattered ourselves would be converted to so many salutary purposes? This peace, for

which so many prayers were offered, so many fasts appointed; this peace, whose return was celebrated by thanksgivings in every church, and, as we hope, in every house, and in every heart, to what purpose was its restoration devoted?

This peace was seized on, not as a means to repair in some measure the ravages which were made on the commerce, the property, the comforts, as well as the population of our country; but must it not, in many instances, be said truly, though most painfully said, to vary their nature, and enhance their malignity? Instead of sedulously employing it to raise us to our former situation, by a prudent restriction in our indulgences, an increased residence in our respective districts, and an endeavour to lighten the difficulties of government, by the continued contribution of its rightful supplies; instead of using it to mitigate the distresses, and to restrain the crimes of the lower orders, by living in the midst of them, each at its natural and appropriate station, and thus neutralising the spirit of disaffection, which took advantage only of their absence to break out; instead of improving its opportunities, or providing against the impending scarcity, which the desertion of the rich increased almost to famine, in giving employment to the industrious, relief to the sick, and bread to the famished; instead of each centinel remaining at his providentially appointed watch,—at this critical moment, a very large proportion of our nobles and gentry, an indefinite number of our laity, and not a few of our clergy, that important part of the community, of which the situation is peculiarly local,—all these, as if simultaneously seized by that mania which, in fabulous history, is said to have sent *one* unfortunate object of divine persecution wandering through the world,—all these important portions of our country at once abandoned it. The only use they made of peace was to fly, with most unrighteous speed, to the authors of our calamities, and of such calamities as it might be thought could not at once have been forgotten, to visit a country which had filled our own with widows and orphans, which had made the rest of Europe a scene of desolation.

Not only hundreds of thousands of our country, men, and women, and children, but millions of our money, so severely wanted at home, were transported from every port to visit this lately execrated country. To *visit*, did I say? that had been little; a short excursion to feed the eye, and gratify the taste with pictures and statues, might have been pleaded as a natural temptation.

Here we conceive the grave Christian moralist will censure the writer as much as she censures the emigrants. He will say, 'the desire is too natural to be right.' If we plead in mitigation of damages, that it was innocent curiosity, we shall be told, that it was a curiosity, which one of our first parents believed innocent, but which lost them both Paradise. If it was a desire of knowledge, it might be a knowledge better unknown; if to cure those prejudices, 'for which our country is a name so dear,' such prejudices may better be retained than cured.

But be this as it may, the truth is, that to multitudes, France was not made a place of visit but a home. For when these wonderful productions of art were restored to the places from whence they had been feloniously taken, did that allay the hunger of emigration? France became the settled residence of multitudes. France was made a scene for the education of English, of Christian, of Protestant children! Sons and daughters, even in the middle ranks of life, were transported thither with an eagerness, as if the land of blood had been a land of promise. And as all fashions descend, not a few of our once simple, plain-hearted English yeomen were drawn in to follow the example of *their betters*, as they are not very correctly called. The infection became general, nor has time as yet stayed the plague.

A late French wit,* who always preferred a calumny to a fact, and was more fond of giving a neat turn to a sentence, than of speaking truth, after visiting this country about the middle of the last century, characterised its natives by saying, the English people resembled their own beer, the top was all froth, the bottom all dregs, but the middle was excellent. If this were at that time true, the middle class has now merged its distinctive character in the other two; it is abandoning the honourable station in the cup which it then held, is adopting its worst ingredients from above and below, and by its mixture with the froth and the feculence, has considerably lessened its claim to its once distinct commendation.†

But the evil, great as it is, does not end here; numbers of a higher strain remain domiciliated in France, and too many who are returned, are more than ever assimilated with French manners. It is to be feared, that with French habits, French principles may be imported. French alliances are contracted, as almost every newspaper records. We are losing our national character. The deterioration is by many thought already visible. In a few years, if things proceed in their present course, or rather with increasing velocity, which is always the case with downward tendencies, the strong and discriminating features of the English heart and mind will be obliterated, and we shall be lost in the undistinguished mass.

In the mean time, let us take warning from the consideration, that the first stage of decline is the beginning of dissolution. Whatever has begun already to decay, is not far from perishing. This contagious intercourse has been too probably the cause of the recent multiplication of those great Sunday entertainments, in the diminution of which we had begun to rejoice; a multiplication which is as likely to contribute to the decline of religion in the domestic arrangements of the great, as in any more obvious and ostensible evil.

What would the veteran moralist, who, in his beautiful and vigorous satire, indignantly exclaimed,

* Voltaire.

† It is almost too ludicrous to assert, that the wife of a reputable farmer, being asked lately what she had done with her daughter, replied, 'I have *Frenched* her and *musicked* her, and shall now carry her to France.

I cannot bear a French motropolis;

What would Johnson have said had he been spared till now?

How would he laugh at Britain's modern tribe,
Dart the keen taunt, and edge the piercing gibe!

How would he have poured out his ready wrath, his cutting sarcasm, his powerful reasoning, his robust morality, on a country which is in danger of deserting its own character, impairing its own virtue, and discrediting its own religion?

We set a just value on the French language as the introduction to much elegant literature; to much indeed that is valuable, but to more that is pernicious. But even this agreeable language, for the higher acquisition of which so many important sacrifices are made, so much domestic duty is relinquished, so much religious principle is hazarded, may be bought too dear. Even if this supreme excellence, the perfection of the Parisian accent, *should* obtain for an English lady the coveted distinction of being taken for a French woman; does she not run some risk, even in her own country and her own home, from the habit of domesticating in our families persons of whom all she may know is, that their accent is good; of whose morals she knows little; and of whose religion she knows nothing, except that, if they happen by great chance to have any, it is of a character hostile to her own. The only hope is, that the foreign teacher may care so little about the matter, as never to introduce religion at all; but this is not a very consoling consideration in the instructors of our children.

There is another grievance connected with this mania for whatever is foreign,—a grievance not the less serious because it is overlooked, and because it affects only a subordinate class in society; we allude to the injury sustained by our domestic manufactures from the abundant importation of French articles of dress and decoration. We forbear to enter on the subject in all its painful extent; we forbear to advert to the looms that are standing still, to the gloominess of our trading streets, to the warehouses that are left solitary, to the shops which are nearly deserted; and shall confine our humble remonstrance to pleading more particularly the distress of those unfortunate females who used to procure a decent support by their own industry, and of whom thousands are now plunging into misery. We would fervently but respectfully advocate the cause of this meritorious and most pitiable class.

If British patriotism be not a plea sufficiently powerful to restrain a temptation, which can only be indulged by the violation of laws, which perhaps the husbands and fathers of the fair offenders have established, we would appeal to the sensibilities of a well-regulated heart, to the tenderness of an enlightened conscience, and to the dictates of justice and charity, whether it be pardonable to yield to every slight temptation merely to gratify vanity, or, to speak more tenderly, to indulge a capricious taste.

When tempted to make the alluring purchase by the superior beauty, real or imaginary, of the article, might we not presume to recommend to every lady to put some such questions as the following to herself:—'By this gratification, illicitly obtained, I not only offend against human laws, but against humanity itself; by this purchase I am perhaps starving some unfortunate young creature of my own sex, who gained her daily bread by weaving her lace or braiding her straw. I am driving her to that extremity of want, which may make her yield to the next temptation to vice, which may drive her to the first sinful means that may offer of procuring a scanty, precarious, and miserable support. It is in vain that I may have perhaps subscribed for her being taught better principles at school, that I have perhaps assisted in paying for her acquisition of her little trade, if by crushing that trade I now drive her to despair, if I throw her on a temptation which may overcome those better principles she acquired through my means. Shall I not then make this paltry—this no sacrifice? Shall I not obtain a victory over this petty allurement, whose consequences when I first gave way to it I did not perceive?"

The distress here described is not a picture drawn by the imagination, a touch of sentimentalism, to exhibit feeling and to excite it. It is a plain and simple representation of the state of multitudes of young women, who having been bred to no other means of gaining their support, will probably, if these fail throw themselves into the very jaws of destruction. Think, then, with tenderness, on these thousands of young persons of your own sex, whom a little self-denial on your part might restore to comfort—might snatch from ruin. Many ladies, who make these unlawful purchases, do not want feeling, they only want consideration. Consider, then, we once more beseech you, consider, that it is not merely their bread, but their virtue, of which you may be unintentionally depriving them; and you will find, that your error is by no means so inconsiderable as it may hitherto have appeared to you.

If the superiority of the foreign purchase you are about to make be not great, you have gained little or nothing by your fault; if it is, and you forego it, you have gained a victory over your own inclination,—the victory of an honest principle over a misleading fancy.

Spare yourself, then, the pain of feeling that, if you hear of any of these unfortunate beings having previously to their entering on other sinful courses, been tempted by famine to commit a robbery—spare yourself the pain of reflecting, that you, perhaps by a thoughtless gratification of your taste, first robbed her of that subsistence, the failure of which has driven her to a crime she abhorred. The evil which appeared little, considered by itself, considered in its possible consequences is of no small magnitude.

But to return.—It was from the land of polished arts that ancient Rome imported the poison of her sturdy morals, the annihilation of her masculine character. England has a palladium for her protection, which Ilium, which Rome never possessed. Yet on that guardian genius depended, as the people thought, the safety of the former; of the latter it was considered as the destiny. Our palladium is the CHRISTIAN, the PROTESTANT RELIGION. It cannot

be taken by storm; but like that of Ilium, it may be taken by stratagem. The French are to us as much more formidable than the Greeks were to Rome, as we have much more to lose. While our guardian genius remains inclosed within our wall, we shall be safe, in spite of wars and revolutions; if we neglect it, like the besieged city of antiquity, we fall: losing our religion, we lose all with it. Religion is our compass, the only instrument for directing and determining our course; and though it will not save the trouble of working the vessel, nor diminish the vigilance of guarding against rocks and shoals; yet it constantly points to that star which, by ascertaining our course, insures our safety.

In making our country an island, Divine Providence seems to have made a provision for our happiness as well as for our security. As that circumstance has protected us from the sword, it should also protect us from the manners of our continental neighbours. The more she labours to resume them, the more she will lose of her independent character. *Le gout du terroir* is often mentioned as the distinctive mark of the country which produces certain wines. The British character, we hope, will always retain its indigenous flavour.

But if Britain, blest by Heaven above all the nations, ancient or modern, recorded in the annals of history, sacred or profane, has not made the most of all the advantages bestowed on her; if she has not yet made the best use of that elevation, on which Divine Providence has placed her; if she has not yet applied to the best possible ends, the rich gifts with which he has endowed her; nor turned the provision made for her happiness to the best account: if, standing on the loftiest summit of naval, military, and literary glory; if favoured with the best civil and religious constitution the wit of man has yet devised;—if, with all these advantages, she has yet some steps to ascend before she reach to the height to which the Almighty seems to have destined her, let her remember, she has resources within himself, by which, with the blessing of Him who conferred them, she may still set an example to all the kingdoms of the earth. We will not say she may acquire a superiority over other nations—of that she has long been in possession—No; we must not try her by her comparative, but her positive merit: not by placing her in juxta-position with other countries, but with the possibilities of her own excellence.

Britain, we repeat, has abundant resources. If it be true that she has lately, in any respect, gone back, rather than advanced; if, when her public character has reached its zenith, her private character is in any thing deteriorated, she has still within herself all the materials of moral renovation; ample means, not only of recovering what has been lost, but of rising to heights yet unattained. It is only to be wished that she may use these resources, and consider them as raw materials, that will not produce their effect without being industriously worked up.

If the familiar and protracted intercourse with a neighbouring nation; if, during this intercourse, the long witnessed contempt of religion, morbid insensibility to morals, desecrated Sabbaths, an abandonment to amusements the most frivolous, to pleasures, knit in one eternal dance; if all this should happily have left unimpaired, or have only tinctured, too slightly to make a lasting impression, the noble simplicity, the ancient rectitude, the sound sense, and the native modesty which have long been the characteristics of the British people; if the growth at home, and within our own doors, of an intolerant and superstitious church, be not too fondly fostered—be not promoted instead of tolerated; if the paramount fondness, in the more delicate sex, for unbounded dissipation, for profane and immoral writers, should decline; if the middle classes among us should return to their ancient sobriety and domestic habits, should cease to vie with the great in expensive dress, and the decorations of high life, and to give their daughters the same useless accomplishments, which are carried too far even in the highest station, and in theirs are preposterous; if the instruction we are at length giving to the poor be as conscientiously conducted as it is generally adopted, and the art of reading be made the vehicle of true religion; if a judicious correction of our criminal code, and a prudent rectification of the demand of pauperism, be successfully followed up; if the African slave-trade should be effectually abolished—not in promise, and on paper, but in very deed and act; if our prisons be made places of reform, instead of increased corruption; if the young offenders be so instructed, that they come not out as bad as the old, and the old come not out worse than they went in; if our venerable universities should fulfil the promise they give of becoming as distinguished for moral discipline and strict religion, as they have ever been, and still are, unrivalled for learning and ability of every kind; if churches be as readily attended, as they will be cheerfully provided; if there be the same honourable attention paid to filling the pulpits, as to raising the buildings; if the Bible be as generally read by the giver, as it is liberally bestowed on the receiver; if the good old practice of family prayer should be revived, and public worship more carefully attended by those who give the law to fashion; if those who are 'the makers of manners' will adopt none but such as deserve to be imitated:—if all these improvements should take place, and which of them, let me ask, is impossible—then, though we laugh to scorn the preposterous notion of human perfectibility, we shall yet have a right to expect that England, so far from being satisfied to excel other nations, will not only excel her present self, but be continually advancing in the scale of Christian perfection.

French Opinion of English Society.

The French nation have lately had many opportunities for forming their opinion of the English. It may be worth our while to consider what opinion they *have* formed: since by ascertaining their present judgment of the English character, we may form some instructive conclusions as to the change their tuition is likely to effect in it.

Foreigners are of opinion that we want polish. If this were all, we should rather blame their discernment, or their deficiency in fair deduction. For grant us that we are solid, and we have high authority for saying that solid bodies take the brightest polish.—And if in point of fact the English character, like the English oak, be susceptible of no inconsiderable polish, it is owing in both to the inherent soundness and firmness of its substance. Soft bodies admit of little polish: in them, therefore, recourse is had to varnish, which hides all flaws; and the thicker it is applied, the more surely it conceals the meanness of the materials beneath its surface.

A late brilliant female writer,* whose genius it would be a reflection on our own taste not to admire, and on our own candour not to extol; has, towards the end of her admirable posthumous work, done, in general, noble justice to the English character. She had talents to appreciate, and opportunities to examine it, in its highest condition and most advantageous forms. It must be observed, that we here presume to touch on no part of her able delineation of English habits and manners, but only so far as private society and conversation are concerned. —On these points we are to look for her exceptions: though on the society of the gentlemen she animadverts with the most flattering consideration; and even to that of the ladies she makes a frequent and generous, but not very successful, effort to be civil.

However, with all the politeness and good nature of this fine writer, two qualities which she seems to have possessed in no ordinary degree, it frequently escapes her, that she found the English ladies deplorably deficient in those shining talents and airy graces which embellish society. Had her visit to London been three or four years later, she might possibly have found, in some quarters, stronger marks of improvement in this talent so near her heart; at least if any expectation might be formed from their subsequent intercourse with the society of Paris, the charms of which she never fails to exhibit in those glowing colours which she so well knows how to lay on, even on the worst ground.

But this eloquent panegyrist of animated conversation seems to be a little mistaken in some of the causes to which she ascribes the heaviness of London parties. She laments with deeper concern than the occasion, even had it been real, seems to require, that the great English gentlemen regularly retire, and spend nine months in the year on their estates in the country. We wish she had happened to mention in what quarter of the kingdom this annual retreat is made, where this voluntary exile *to* the native home is to be found.

We say voluntary, for Bristish gentlemen are not *relegues* from our capital, as ex-ministers and discarded favourites used to be from Paris. Neither the fate, nor the credit, nor the liberty, nor the choice of habitation of a man of rank in this country, depends on the favour of an arbitrary king; nor does his happiness, his general acceptance, nor his respectability, hang on the smiles of a despotic and capricious master. And if her concern be excessive for the annual voluntary banishment of our men of taste from the centre of social delights, which she would wish to see converted into a circle 'never ending, still beginning;' had this lady never further heard of such places as Bath, or Tunbridge, or Brighton, or any other of those numberless felicitous resources, those supplemental relaxations, those by-reliefs of the *ennui* of retreat, which always stand ready to intercept the speed of the fashionable exile, and to break the fall between the London and the country home?

But if even the fact were as desperate as she intimates, the self-imposed regulation would not be likely to produce the effect she deprecates. This lady, born herself to excel in polished society, regrets this injurious retreat, chiefly because it interrupts the brilliant intercourse of the metropolis, and causes conversation to suffer so tedious and melancholy a suspension. Now we should almost as soon have expected that a philosopher would have imagined a supernumerary eclipse of the sun for the same period, and then have brought it to account for the late dreariness of the natural world and the inclemency of the seasons.

She laments that the manner in which these absentees from the source and centre of intellectual enjoyment spend their time in the country, not a little disqualifies them for the charms of society. With all due deference to this able reasoner, from whom it is hazardous to differ, we should have really thought, that the long leisure for reading, to which this supposed solitude must be at least as favourable to some, as that indolence, sleeping, and drinking which she too indiscriminately ascribes to most, would have been generally seized on for the former purpose by men, who are all scholars by education, and frequently studious from taste.—Thus, instead of starving the intellect, would not this leisure rather serve to nourish it; and, instead of lowering the mind, furnish it with fresh images, enrich it with new ideas, and aided by the 'short retirement urging sweet return,' dispose it to repair with a full mind, additional spirit, replenished resources, and increased energy, to that more splendid society which she deems the life of life; that feast of intellect, of which the writer of these pages is fully disposed to acknowledge the pleasure and the profit?—Those to whom she alludes, who only hunt, and loll, and drink, and sleep at their country seats, are not, we presume, of that race of active intellect who would swell the flow of soul by their contributions, were they even tied as closely and constantly to the metropolis as the tavern waiter who draws their corks, or the more respectable purveyor who supplies the market with their luxuries.

As we presume that there is at this time at least as much genius, and taste, and literature, at home, as in any capital abroad, consequently there can be no deficiency of the finest materials for enriching and embellishing society, were their possessors a little more disposed to imitate a neighbouring nation in one talent, in which they must be allowed to excel all others—the talent *se faire valoir*.

There is more sterling weight than show in

* Madam de Stael.

the genuine English character; and Mr. Addison was not the only one of his countrymen who, with respect to intellectual wealth, could draw for a thousand pounds, though he may not always have a guinea in his pocket. But if they are incessantly producing all they are worth to every comer; when called out in public situations, in the senate, the pulpit, or at the bar, we see all the energies of genius in all its opulence and variety. We see the most powerful reasoning, adorned by the most persuasive eloquence. With these ample materials for conversation, they are not perhaps driven, like some of their more volatile neighbours, to talk for the sake of talking. Talking is not with Englishmen so completely a *besoin*, so entirely a natural necessity. They are more disposed to consider conversation as the refreshment than the pabulum of life. Added to this, their professional and laborious duties abroad, may make some of them frequently consider society as a scene in which rather to repose their minds, than to keep them in full exercise.

Learning in this country, is not confined to academicians, authors, and professional men. There is scarcely a man of fortune in the kingdom who, if he be not actually learned, has not, however, been bred to learning. The effect of that high institution, brought from the halls and bowers of our distinguished seats of learning, is generally diffused; it serves to fill and adorn the stations of dignity, honour, and utility of public, as well as to grace the shade and raise the tone of private life. So that an illiterate gentlemen is more rarely to be met with in this country, than in any other in the world. When a learned dignitary of our church enquired of one of the French emigrant clergy, who took refuge in England, if he understood Greek, he coolly replied, '*Monsieur, nous avons un professeur!*'

But to return to the other sex.—Our only fear on this subject is, lest they should not always remain what the writer in question represents them as being at present. If, indeed, we were only sent into this world to be entertaining; if we had nothing to do but to talk, nothing to aim at but to shine, nothing to covet but admiration; we should more readily coincide in opinion with this sprightly lady.

A great ancient has pronounced silence to be no unimportant art in society, and points, in a particular instance, at one man, as the wisest in an enlightened assembly, because he knew how to hold his tongue. If there had not been many discreet imitators of this taciturn orator in the London parties, what a diminution would it have been in the number of this lady's delighted auditors, and what a lessening of their own gratification in enjoying the exhibition of her superlative talents!

There are, indeed, very frequently sounder causes for being silent than deficiency of talent, or lack of information; and how happily would the multitude of idle talkers be diminished, if they never opened their mouths, but when they had something to say. The writer in question ascribes to causes which appear quite new, the reserve and insipidity of the English ladies, when she says, that the true motive is the fear of ridicule; and that as they are not called upon to enliven conversation, they are more struck with the danger of talking, than with the inconvenience of silence. She then somewhat unaccountably, goes on to attribute the frigidity of their society to the dread of newspapers; and conjectures, that because they do not delight in political warfare, they keep themselves back as much as possible in the presence of others. We did not know that English ladies were either so political or so discreet, or that vivacity and the graces were such heavy losers from these unsuspected causes. Perhaps this lady did not know that the English educate, or rather *did once* educate, women of fashion for *home*. A man of sense will desire to find in his domestic associate, good taste, general information, and a correct judgment. In the course of their literary pursuits and conversation together, he will take pleasure in refining and improving her mind; but he would not delight in a wife who will be always introducing subjects for debate, who will be always disputing the palm of victory. Competition and emulation do not contain the elements of domestic happiness. He married for a companion, not for a competitor. Rivalry is no great promoter of affection; nor does superiority in wit always confer superiority in happiness. A professed female wit, like a professed devotee to music, will be soon weary of wasting her talent on her husband; and even he, though he might like such an occasional display in a visit to the house of his friend, will find other talents wanting in a constant home companion: talents which will not only embellish, but improve society; qualities which will eclipse wit, and outlive beauty.

We do not find that those brilliant French women, who had spoiled this sprightly writer for English society, reserved their wit for the entertainment of their husbands, or their learning for the instruction of their families. Their most graceful ethic and courtly poet, who had the best opportunities of ascertaining the real value of professed wits in society, has given his estimate in a single line:

Discurs de bon mots, fades caracteres!

Among other deductions from brilliant society in England, this lively writer laments an evil, which, if things proceed as they have now begun, we fear may not always remain a subject of lamentation, as coquetry is, in her recipe book, the flavour which gives to society its poignancy: and this zest she complains is not to be found in England, except in the unmarried! If, however, the growing imitation of French manners should hereafter add this new savour to the real accomplishments of English ladies, their fathers and husbands may not think it the most desirable finishing. She accounts for the fondness of our ladies for foreign travel in a manner not the most flattering to their purity, by supposing it to arise as much from the desire of escaping from the restraint on their manners, as from the influence of the fogs on their constitutions.

She is at no loss to know the true cause of a fact, which we are entirely indebted to her sagacity for discovering at all, namely, why *the dis-*

gust of life seizes on those women who are confined to these inanimate societies. Certainly this explanation admits the following preliminary question,—Are the movers in these lifeless circles disgusted with their existence? By the the way, we do not quite understand whether by *le degout de la vie* she means a dislike to company, or a taste for suicide.

But let us do justice to her who has in most respects done ample justice to our country. If she is a little sickened with the moody taciturnity, and unassuming manners of our ladies, she graciously redeems their characters by making them a full allowance of the more solid virtues; acknowledges that sincerity and truth form the basis of their conversation, even where all the graces are wanting. It is somewhat doubtful, however, whether she would not willingly have relinquished the actual, in exchange for the absent qualities.

While we continue to preserve, or rather to improve in, this only true foundation of Christian intercourse, we will less regret the want of its embellishments; and while reserve is protection, and delicacy security, we will console ourselves under these minor evils, which are considered as so cruelly detracting from the fascinations of polished society.

Lord Chesterfield, who adorned conversation by his wit as much as he impaired it by his principles, has defined politeness 'to be the art of pleasing. Saint Paul, one of the few writers with whom this accomplished peer was not acquainted, recommends, with as much warmth as his lordship, the duty of pleasing our neighbour. But here the two moralists part. The noble writer would have us please others to benefit ourselves. All his precepts originate, proceed, and terminate in that one object—self. The Christian writer directs us to 'please others for their good,' their highest good, their moral 'edification.' The essence of the worldly code of ethics is selfishness; that of the Christian is disinterestedness.

There is a generosity in Christian intercourse, the very reverse of that little and narrowing spirit ascribed to it by those who do not know, or do not love it. It cannot be otherwise; for are not those who cultivate it ever the followers of Him, whose sublime characteristic it was—'that he pleased not himself?'

In the society of Christians, every man does not so much look on his own things as on the things of others. Christians do not make conversation a theatre for dispute or display. They consider it as a reciprocation of benignity; a desire to draw out the talents of those who, with more merit, have less pretension. An interchange of sentiment between intellectual and highly principled persons confers both pleasure and benefit. To make it at once pleasant and profitable, there must be an accordance of principle, if not of opinion. The conversation will frequently have a tincture of religion, even when the topic under discussion is not religious. Topics barely secular are susceptible of this spirit; and in pious and discreet hands, they will be treated in a way to promote religion without professing it.

True religion keeps the whole man in order whether he be engaged in business or in company. It sheds its benign influence far beyond its own sphere, and by a reflex light casts a ray on actions or speculations to which it has no immediate reference. The Christian does not go out of his way in search of wit, or embellishment, though he does not refuse them when they naturally present themselves, when they grow out of the subject, and the story is not invented for their forced introduction, nor any sacrifice made of something better than themselves. The Christian uses his talents temperately, seeks not to eclipse the less brilliant; and had much rather not shine at all, than shine at the expense of another. The religious man in society finds means for the exercise of many christian virtues without descanting on them,—candour, charitable construction, patience with the less enlightened, and temper with the less forbearing, a scrupulous veracity, an inviolable sincerity, a watchful guard against every vain thought and every light expression. He is careful to preserve wit unsullied, gayety pure, and vivacity correct. He is constantly on the watch to introduce subjects of a higher strain; when the occasion offers, he gladly embraces it, but with a due regard to time, place, and circumstance. Let it be observed, we are not here speaking of select society, associating for religious improvement, but of the duty of keeping ordinary conversation within the bounds and under the discipline of correct principle.

English Opinion of French Society.

It may at first sight be censured as a departure from the general design of these slight pages, to introduce any allusion to the manners of foreign countries, as exhibited in their own journals, memoirs, and letters. But when it is considered how deeply our own manners are now becoming assimilated with theirs, it may not be thought quite irrelevant to the subjects under consideration, to take a cursory view of the habits of society in a neighbouring metropolis, so far as they may be likely to affect and influence those of our own country, avoiding every thing public or political, or general, and confining the few cursory remarks to be made, to the fashionable circles of private society.

Paris has been long looked up to by many with admiration, as the centre of all that is brilliant in wit, or fascinating in conversation. In a capital, which before the Revolution was said to contain twenty thousand men of letters, high society was not likely to want eulogists. The extravagant encomiums bestowed on these societies by their own people, and echoed back by ours, may prevent its being thought inexpedient to give a superficial sketch of a few of the leading characters which seem to have set the superiority of the circles over which they presided above all competition. It is, we repeat, the apprehension that this boasted superiority may kindle undue admiration, and even excite envy, in the ardent and ingenuous mind of young persons of taste, who feel themselves precluded from the enjoyment, which must apologize for

the freedom, whilst it explains the motive, of these observations.

It is indeed wounding to delicacy to speak explicitly on things which should not be so much as named. Yet though it is painful to touch on such topics, how shall we be so likely to prevent evils, as by exposing them? Perhaps it may check the desire of imitation, lightly to touch on a few of the *bad characters* who preside over these *good societies*.

That many have escaped their pollution, is a thing more to inspire wonder than to excite imitation. All do not die of the plague where the plague rages; but the preservation of the few is no proof of the salubrity of the air, where so many have been infected.

In certain societies the difficulties of being witty is materially diminished by the readiness of the speaker to make any sacrifice, both to piety and modesty, to the good thing he is about to utter. While the feeling of that very sacrifice may perhaps give a keener relish to the pleasure of the profane hearer, the Christian, not inferior in talent, rejects in horror the reputation for wit to be obtained by any such sacrifice himself, and disdains to sanction or applaud it as the hearer of others.

Though the late sanguinary revolution in France overturned law, order, government, and religion; and had given a more emphatical character to crime of every description; yet if we take a cursory view of the period immediately preceding it, we shall see that this tremendous convulsion rather aggravated than introduced many of its moral corruptions. To be convinced of this, we need not travel so far back as the period which the natives consider as the *acme* of human glory—the age of *Louis Quatorze*, of Richelieu, and the Academy, the immortal Forty, as this academy had the modesty to call itself.

More sober thinkers are, however, of opinion, that what characterised that splendid reign, was unbounded extravagance, elegant profligacy, and tolerated debauchery. Surely these, which were its notorious distinctions, are practices which contribute little to the real grandeur of a country; unless, indeed, it can be proved that, according to the fearfully unguarded expression of the otherwise moral Burke, that the exhibition of vice in a better taste, by taking from it all its apparent grossness, takes away half of its real turpitude.

What arts of refinement could neutralise the evil, when all the bounds of moral restraint were so far broken through, as that the royal wife and the royal mistress were every where received with the same appearance of respect, when they were even met together in the same societies?

Louis has lately obtained, in certain quarters, a kind of resuscitation of his buried fame, by the only method perhaps by which it could have been raised,—a comparison with the prisoner of St. Helena. But surely to have committed fewer crimes than the man who has committed more than any other man, is not to have attained a very high degree in the scale of moral excellence. Are splendour in decoration and magnificence in expense a mantle broad enough to cover that injustice and those exactions on a plundered people by which they were purchased? The piety of the king's latter days is frequently thrown into the scale against the disorders of his earlier life. But surely the transition from profligacy to persecution is no great improvement in the human character. Were not his false virtues even more destructive than his avowed vices? Did matters take a better turn, when the monarch by exchanging gross immoralities for the exercise of a superstitious and intolerant religion, indulged himself and his directress in a long and bitter persecution of his own subjects? a persecution accompanied with every act of the most unrelenting cruelty. Exile, proscription, torture, death, were the rewards of four millions of his faithful protestant subjects! To these rigorous exercises of arbitrary power, he was encouraged and impelled by a woman who had herself been educated in the faith she now endeavours to exterminate. We pass over this intermediate government of 'the godless Regent trembling at a star,' in whose character, in addition to the most disgraceful vices, we see a shocking, but not uncommon union of the wildest superstition with the most avowed infidelity.

During the reign of the next equally corrupt successor, we have endless records of the state of society among persons in the higher walks life. These notices are to be found in a multitude of the letters and memoirs of the individuals who were themselves actors and interlocutors in these scenes of familiar life. These fashionable societies are all that come within our present designs. Many of those works have preserved the history of characters, principles, and sentiments, which had they been consigned to eternal oblivion, religion would have had less to mourn, and virtue less to regret.

Many of these writings, for life would be too short, and time ill spent to peruse them all, are adorned with elegancies of composition, and graces of style, which, had they been devoted to the purposes for which they were given, might have benefitted the world as much as they have injured it. Out of all these mischievous but lighter writings, we shall only mention one or two; nor would they have been noticed in a little work of this nature, but for the popularity they have obtained among us, and our dread of that natural progress, the tendency of admiration to produce imitation.

In the life of Marmontel, written by himself, we have an extraordinary specimen of decorous vice and accredited infamy—of abandoned manners, to which reference is frequently made, at least to the characters which exhibit them, without the slightest feeling of their turpitude. Vices abound and are revealed without the least apparent suspicion of their guilt. The intimations, indeed, are not repeated in the way of boasting, but look as if the writer did not think that concealment of the vice would raise the character he was eulogizing. If there are no offensive descriptions of vicious manners, it seems to be because they were not understood to be vicious; and if gayety of spirit seems to conceal from the writer the complexion of his own morals, gayety of style seems almost to make the reader lose sight of the character of

the company in which he is passing his time. In fact the delineation of those characters consists rather in a morbid insensibility to sin, than in an ambitious display of it. The slight veil thrown over corrupt manners by decency of expression, seems the effect of some remains, not of principle, but of good taste. It is the cold-bloodedness of a heart stagnated by long habits of impunity; for while the passions are inflamed by criminal indulgences, the sensibilities of the soul are chilled. The mind insensibly loses that delicacy of perception which nicely distinguishes not only the shades of evil, but the very existence of the distinction between vice and virtue. This deadness of principle, and liveliness of language, it is which makes this writer, and others we could name, so peculiarly dangerous.

Women of fashion, of the very worst description, to whose parties the writer referred to was familiarly admitted, are named with unbounded admiration, not merely of their talents, but their virtues. The charms of their conversation, and the amiableness of their characters, are the theme of his unmixed panegyric. Incidentally, however, as a thing by the by, as a trifle not requiring to be named expressly, as a thing not invalidating any of their perfections, it comes out, that these women, so faultless and so panegyrised, are living in an illicit commerce with different men—men, whose wives are, with the same uncensurable guilt, carrying on similar connexions with the husbands of other women! Sobriety, chastity, the conjugal and maternal virtues, are not thought necessary to be called in to complete their round of perfection. Impurity of heart and life, dereliction of all the domestic duties, are never brought forward as any deduction from the all-atoning merit of graces of manner and vivacity of conversation.

Divine Providence seems to have intended advanced age as a season of repose, reflection, and preparation for death; and to have sent its infirmities, sufferings, and debility, as gracious intimations of our approaching change, and with a merciful view of our attaining by those remembrances, to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

But one of the unhallowed projects on which these accomplished societies seem to have congratulated themselves, was in defeating this providential procedure. It was their boasted aim to cheat old age of itself—of its present inconveniences, its decays, and its prospective views, by a more amusing method. They contrived to divert the stage of infirmity into a scene of superinduced gayety and increased levity. Instead of desiring to invest it with the peaceful attributes of calmness and resignation, they invented the means of making old age lose itself, as it were, in youthful images, not only by indulging in light reading, but loose composition. One of them was so successfully boiled in Medea's kettle, that his eulogist triumphantly tells us he translated Ariosto, and published tales exhibiting pictures of voluptuousness without indecency; and these boasted exploits are adduced as adding fresh laurels to a being on the very verge of eternity!

Hear a celebrated academician immortalize one of the deceased confraternity in his public oration! In illustrating the character of his friend, who died in extreme old age, he describes this period as 'a season when ingenious trifling is peculiarly graceful; a period in which men might give themselves up to levity with the least scruple and the most success. It is in old age, says the orator, that *the mind is disabused on all subjects, and that a man has a right to jest upon every thing!* It is then that long experience has taught him the wit of concealing reason under a veil which may embellish it! *

Whoever has cast an eye on the lately published letters of Madame du Deffane,—a most unnecessary and uprofitable addition to the late load of similar literary mischiefs,—will have beheld such a picture of the manners even of private and select society, among persons of high rank, science, taste, and literature, as must make him look on these distinctions without envy, when beheld disconnected with those principles which alone render talents estimable.

In the history of this distinguished lady, we find these striking circumstances: they present a melancholy instance how completely in Paris, at that time, a disregard of all the obligations of duty, all sense of religion, all the charities of domestic virtue, all the purposes of social usefulness, was, on *her* part, perfectly compatible with her being received into the first society. On the part of her associates, all the objections, insurmountable, we trust, in any other place, were there sacrificed to the reigning idol—the fondness for display in conversation, the vanity of eclipsing those who eclipsed others.

We see also how little splendid talents contribute to the felicities of the life, or to the virtues of the possessor. We even see that, when not under the control of sound principle, they awfully increase the present capacity for evil, and the responsibility of a future reckoning. Instead of promoting improvement, they carry contamination. In morals as well as in politics,

'Great power is an achievement of great ill.'

Some of these brilliant societies fostered in their bosoms the serpents that were so soon to sting, not only their country, but all Europe. Here were cherished those academical philosophers, wits, and political economists, who first sounded the alarm for the simultaneous extinction of thrones and altars; who first exhibited the portentous remedies for curing despotism by anarchy, and superstition by atheism; who sowed the first prolific seeds of those revolutionary horrors which so rapidly sprung up into the poisonous tree of liberty, and who hurled their arrows at the God of Heaven, and erected on the meditated ruins of his kingdom, the temple of the goddess of reason.

Previously to some of Madame du Deffane's numerous intrigues, she had been separated from her husband, on the ground which, it is presumed, the laws of England would not recognise as a lawful impediment—*that 'he was a weak and tiresome companion!'* She was extraordinarily acute, but her acuteness, though it was frequently just, was always malicious.

* Speech of Condorcet to the Academy on the death of Monsieur de Tressen.

It is difficult to say whether she was more completely deficient in sensibility or principle. She possessed all the qualities which attract, but wanted all those which attach; or rather, she wanted no talent but that of turning those she possessed to a better account. Not possessing the female virtues, she either did not believe in their existence, or despised them. If she wanted any vice, it was that of hypocrisy; for she takes little pains to hide qualities which were not fit to be seen. If she possessed any virtue, it was frankness, which yet was often disfigured by coarseness, and not seldom counteracted by falsehood. She wanted all the good feelings of kindness, affection, and tenderness; and possessed in perfection all the bad ones of ill-nature, jealousy, and envy; but her ruling passion was a selfishness the most deeply rooted, and an egotism the most completely unconquerable.

The dark and hollow character which she takes little pains to conceal, is rendered more broadly conspicuous by the warmth of her colouring, the strength of her language, and the power of her wit, all frequently exercised in proclaiming her own impieties.

It is a striking proof of the unrelenting rancour of her heart, that a friend, of the same class of character,* whom she had formerly loved as much as she could love any woman; one who had been her select companion in her own house fifteen years, but who had quitted her in disgust, and set up a *talking house* for herself, which drew away some of 'the best feathers in her wing;'—on hearing the death of this rival lady, she only exclaimed, 'I wish she had died many years ago, and then I should not have lost D'Alembert!'

We learn from her letters, that her splendid society was composed not merely of wits, philosophers, and academicians, but of women of rank, of nobles, and of statesmen, with one of whom she was connected.—From those, it must be confessed, admirably written epistles, we profitably learn much of the hollowness of worldly friendships, much of the insincerity of mere wits and mere men of letters—of persons who associate together, partly for the credit of having it known that they are so associated—who mix acrimony and adulation, venturing to indemnify themselves for their reciprocal flattery when together, by their cutting sarcasms when separated. Happily, the more we see of these communications the more we are convinced that nothing but sound principle, 'godly sincerity,' a conquest over vanity, a triumph over egotism, an habitual struggle against selfishness can establish an honourable, virtuous and durable friendship, or shed a benign lustre on the most polished society.

We repeat, that these reports are not industriously gleaned from rival parties, ill-informed journalists, nor even from virtuous writers, eager to expose the vices they detested; but from the principal performers in the scene—from a woman whose uncontrollable openness prevents her concealing her own vices.

We see, not without pain, her exposure of the faults of some of the associates whom she so sedulously courts, and so constantly abuses; we see the malignity which forces itself through all her endeavours to appear amiable in the eyes of the distinguished person to whom she writes; we see the corroding envy, the gnawing jealousy, and sometimes the obvious aversion to the individuals of a society, without which she cannot exist; which society probably entertained a reciprocal hatred of their flattering hostess, and yet could not exist without *her*. All this exhibits a scene, from which an unsophisticated English heart turns away, sickening with disgust.

This unhappy woman, old, deaf, blind, repining, and impious, yet drew this accomplished society about her by their mutual fondness for conversation. They met without affection; they parted without regret; yet meet they must—they were necessary to each other, not for comfort, for they knew neither the name nor the thing; but society being an article of the first necessity for the support of existence, it must be had with companions hating, and hated by, each other. Under such circumstances, the fondness for society seems not so much a taste, as a raging appetite.

It is, however, a cheerless, heartless society, where persons of talents and breeding meet, not so much to enjoy each other, as to get rid of themselves. Intimacy without confidence, and intercourse without esteem, add little to the genuine delights of social life. Competition, while it inflames vanity, is no improver of kindness.

In a city like Paris, where men were wits and authors by profession, and ladies judges and critics by courtesy, nothing was considered as an exclusion from these societies but want of talents to amuse, or taste to decide. The poet produced his work, not, however, so much to be corrected as applauded; not so much to be counselled as flattered; he, in return, paying usuriously, in the same counterfeit coin, the honour conferred on him, and the benefit done him, by their proclamation of the beauty of his work; his fame, perhaps, suspended on the avowed patronage of a woman whom we, in our plain language, should call infamous. He is grateful to receive his imprimatur and his crown of laurel from fair and fashionable, but impure hands; and Paris resounds, next morning, with the immortality assigned him by the decision of this coterie.

All this might be very well, or at least would not be so very bad, if there were no future reckoning; but to see old age without consolation, dreading solitude as only less terrible than death; to contemplate loss of sight as only augmenting spiritual blindness, yet to see the afflicted sufferer clinging to this miserable existence, and closing a life of sin with a death without penitence and without hope; to consider talents capable of great things, abused and misapplied; a God not merely forsaken, but denied; all these are images from which the sober mind turns away with horror softened by compassion. May every daughter of Britain say, with the patriarch of old, 'Come not into their secret, O my soul; to their assembly let not thine honour be united!'

Some ladies of unimpeached morality were found in these coteries. True: yet we hope to

* Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse.

be forgiven for saying, that they could have retained but little of that delicacy which should preserve the purity of society, when they make no scruple of mixing intimately with women whose practices they would not by any means adopt. In such society virtue withers, delicacy is impaired, and principle finally extinguished.

In this view it is impossible not to make a short digression, to observe with gratitude on the obligations of English society to our late venerated queen. Not to insist on the admirable examples she set in her exact performance of all the domestic duties; her public conduct, in one important instance, will ever reflect honour on her memory—we mean her solicitude to prevent the impure mixtures to which we are now alluding. She raised as it were, a rampart between vice and virtue; and her strictness in excluding from the royal presence all who had forfeited their claim to be introduced to it, had a general moral effect, by excluding them also from the virtuous society of others of their own rank. Discriminations of this nature are of incalculable value in preserving the distinctions between correctness and impurity, when no offender, though of the highest rank, can preserve the public dignity of the station she has dishonoured.

'Twas hard, perhaps, on here and there a waif,
Desirous to return, and not received;
But was a wholesome rigour in the main,
And taught the unblemished to preserve with care
That purity, whose loss was loss of all.'

COWPER.

London also has had its select assemblies for conversation. They were neither trifling, dull, nor pedantic. If there were less display of wit, less pains to be easy, less study to be natural, less affectation of being unaffected, less effort to be unconstrained, there was more sincerity, integrity, and kindness. If there was a less perpetual aim at being ingenious, ingenuity was never wanting. If there were less persiflage and sarcasm, there was more affection, truth, and nature. Religion, though not discussed, was always venerated, and no degree of rank or talent would have procured an introduction when there was any taint on the reputation.

The tone of social intercourse is at present, perhaps, likely to be raised by the recent adoption of more direct religious improvement in the private parties of some persons of rank and talents. But to return to Paris.

One instance more of the substitution of talent for virtue, and of the little regard paid to the absence of the one where the other abounded; one instance more, and we will relieve our readers, and carry them to breathe a purer atmosphere in better company. The celebrated Madame d'Epinay is described by one of her admirers,* who came in the order of succession next after Rousseau, not only as the most attractive, but most *discreet* of women! This discretion, which is his rather than hers, appears in his making her indulgence in forbidden gratifications, consistent with her constant regard for public opinion, and the desire of reputation. He records, intentionally to her honour, that being above all prejudices herself, (that is, above the weakness of Christianity,) yet no one knew better what was due to the prejudices of others. She conformed, he observes, as scrupulously to old usages, as to new opinions, and kept up the outward observances of the church as much as a woman of an ordinary mind could have done; that is, she was at once an infidel and a hypocrite. He proclaims to her glory, that, 'without believing in any catechism but that of good sense, she never failed to receive the sacraments, painful as the stupid ceremony was, with the best grace imaginable, as often as decency, or the scruples of her friends, made it becoming.' 'Perhaps,' adds her profane panegyrist, 'there was as much greatness in receiving them with *her* notion of them, as there would have been in refusing them.' Is it any wonder that, with such a conformity of principles, she obtained the prize of the academy, as well as the homage of the academician?

We are amused to think with what a contemptuous smile of pity these ladies, with all their allowed taste and learning, must, if they were consistent, have beheld the pictures of these obsolete wives, Andromache and Penelope, as delineated by the Grecian bard—pictures of female excellence and domestic virtue, which have drawn the tear of admiring sympathy from many a British eye. The poet has omitted to mention whether their valiant lords loved them the less for having spent the hours of *their* absence in scenes of bloody warfare or perilous adventure, in mournful solitude, cheating the time in simple occupations, yet such as served to keep up the memory of their beloved heroes; in one, by contriving decorations for a living lord, or, in the other, honouring the memory of the dead one, by preparing funeral honours for his father, ingeniously deferring the detested second nuptials by nightly unravelling the daily labour, and thus keeping her promise of consent when the work should be finished, and preserving her fidelity to her lord by never finishing it.

What manly English heart would not prefer the fond anxiety of the Trojan wife, which led her in secret to the watch-tower to mark the battle, and tenderly seek to explore her husband so soon to bleed,—to all the Aspasias of Greece, to all the Du Deffands, the De l'Espinasses, the D'Epinays, to all the beau ideal of the fancy, and all the practical pollutions of the life, of the '*bonnes societies*' of the metropolis of France.

But, happily, we need not go back to ransack antiquity for *examples* in the finely imagined females of Troy or Ithica, nor for *warnings* to the polished, but profligate courtezans of Athens, nor to the criminal countesse of Paris;—we may find instances of the one, and a complete contrast to the other, nearer home. We need go no further for the highest examples of female dignity, talent, and worth, than are to be found in the private biography of our own country.

We could produce no inconsiderable number in the highest rank of women, who if their names are not blazoned in the book of fame, will be recorded in more lasting characters in the book of life—who, if their memoirs are not spangled with their *bons mots*, have yet had their good actions and holy principles embalmed

* Le Baron de Grimm.

in the writings of their faithful Christian friends. But we shall confine ourselves to a very few.

The Lady Mary Armyne, descended from the ancient Earls of Shrewsbury, was eminently skilled in human, but especially in divine learning. But the remembrance of her talents, which appear to have been of the first order, is lost in that of her Christian virtues. Among numerous other instances of her pious exertions, she contributed largely to the support of a society for converting the Indians in New-England, long before missions were thought of by her tardy countrymen. On hearing of the fatal massacre of St. Bartholomew, she instantly devoted a large sum to those exiled and destitute clergymen who had fled hither for protection. Her piety was as exemplary as that extensive benevolence of which it was the source.

In Birch's Life of the Hon. Robert Boyle, there is a most interesting account of Mary, Countess of Warwick, of whom it is saying every thing to say that she was entirely worthy of being sister to that illustrious Christian philosopher. Of the eminently pious Lady Frances Hobart, the ornament of the court of James the First, Dr. Collins has preserved an interesting memorial. A long and unwearied attention, for many years to the bodily sufferings of her lord, could only be surpassed by her anxiety for his spiritual interests. Through the blessing of God she became the honoured instrument of a total change in his character, who never named her by any other appellation than that of his 'dear saint.' This term had not then fallen into reproach.

Of Susanna, Countess of Suffolk, it is impossible to say too much. For brevity's sake, however, we must restrict ourselves to one or two particulars in speaking of a life which was a constant series of secret piety and active benevolence. When near her end, which happened in her twenty-second year, she implored her lord, that whatever provision might be made for the fortunes or acquirements of her children, that they might be educated in the strictest principles of Christianity, in comparison of which she esteemed all worldly accomplishments as nothing. To her dying father, who had been inattentive to Christian duties, she administered such spiritual supports, that in rapture he praised God that he should live to receive his best religious consolations from his own child!

To the memory of the Lady Cutts, the incomparable wife of the gallant Lord Cutts, so distinguished at the siege of Namur, noble justice has been done in an admirable funeral sermon of Bishop Atterbury, which we would recommend to every reader who has a taste for exalted piety or fine writing.

The Lady Elizabeth Hastings was not less distinguished for superior talents than for eminence in every Christian attainment.—She has been celebrated for both in the Tatler, under the very inappropriate appellation of Aspasia. No two characters could form a more perfect contrast.

But the time would fail to enumerate all the English ladies who have conferred honour on their country. Of those already mentioned all possessed considerable talents. Some were eminent for their skill in the dead languages; others for their knowledge of philosophy and the sciences; all for their high religious attainments. All were practical Christians—all adorned their profession by the strictest attention to the domestic, the relative, and the social duties.*

But what shall we say to Rachel, Lady Russell? Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all! She has unintentionally bequeathed us her character in her letters. Though there is little elegance in her style, there is all the dignity of wisdom and truth in her sentiments. Many specimens of epistolary writing might be produced, which excel these in the graces of composition, but few which surpass them in that strong sense, solid judgment, and those discriminating powers which were the characteristics of her intellectual attainments, as heroic fortitude, Christian humility, unshaken trust in God, and submission to his dispensations, were of her religious character. Such a combination of tenderness the most exquisite, magnanimity the most unaffected, and Christian piety the most practical, have not often met in the same mind.

An acute, but sceptical French writer, calls 'Magnanimity the good sense of pride, and the noblest way of obtaining praise.'—How well has the prince of Pagan philosophers, by anticipation, corrected this tinsel phrase!' 'If thou art not good, thy magnanimity is ridiculous, and worthy of no honour.' How did our sublime Christian sufferer practically improve upon both! 'Seek not the honour which cometh from men, but that which cometh from God.'

Whether we view this illustrious daughter of the virtuous Southampton taking notes on the public trial of her noble consort, concealing the tender anguish of the wife under the assumed composure of the secretary; whether we behold her, after his condemnation, prostrate at the feet of the unfeeling monarch, imploring a short reprieve for her adored husband, while the iron-hearted king heard the petition without emotion, and refused it without regret; whether we behold her sublime composure at their final separation, which drew from her dying lord the confession, 'the bitterness of death is past;' whether we behold her heroic resolution rather to see him die, than to persuade him to any dishonourable means to preserve his life; whether we see her superiority to resentment afterwards towards the promoters of his execution,—no expression of an unforgiving spirit; no hard sentence escaping her, even against the savage Jeffries, who pronounced his condemnation, adding insult to cruelty; no triumph when that infamous judge was afterwards disgraced and imprisoned; if we view her in that more than temperate letter to the King a few days after her dear lord's execution, declaring that, if she were capable of consolation, it would only be that her lord's fame might be preserved in the King's more favourable opinion:—had long habits of voluptuousness left any sense of pity in this corrupt king; or, rather, if a heart had not been forgotten in his anatomy, it must have been

* For a full account of these, and many other equally eminent ladies, see 'Memoirs of Pious Women.'

touched at her humble entreaty that 'he would grant his pardon to a woman amazed with grief, to the daughter of a man who had served his father in his greatest extremities, and his Majesty in his greatest perils:'—if we view this extraordinary sufferer under all these trials, while we admire the woman, we must adore the divine grace which alone could sustain her under them.

After this imperfect sketch, may we not say, that, for an example of conjugal tenderness, we need not go out of our own country for a perfect model? Portia swallowing fire because she would not survive her Brutus, the *Pæte, non dolet* of the faithful Arraia, as she stabbed herself, and then presented the sword to her husband, to set him an example of dying bravely; these heroic instances of conjugal affection, which have been the admiration of ages, are surpassed by the conduct of Lady Russell: *they* died a voluntary death rather than outlive their husbands; Christianity imposed on *her* the severer duty of surviving hers—of living to suffer calamities scarcely less trying, and to perform duties scarcely less heroic. After weeping herself blind, after the loss of her only son, the Duke of Bedford, let us view her called to witness the death of her daughter, the Duchess of Rutland. After seeing her dead corpse, let us behold her going to the chamber of her other daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, then confined in childbed, of which the other had just died. When her only surviving daughter inquired after her sister, the mother cheerfully replied, 'I have just seen her out of bed!'—It was in her coffin.

In whatever attitude, then, we consider the portrait of this illustrious lady it is with fresh admiration. Each lineament derives additional beauty from its harmony with the rest, the symmetry of the features corresponding with the just proportions of the whole figure.

England's Best Hope.

We have dwelt on the present and the past, as well with reference to our neighbours as ourselves. If we have shown that we have little regret in any still remaining difference between the inhabitants of the opposite shores, and much to fear from a growing resemblance between them; if we have successfully hinted at the grounds of our own real superiority, and the possibility of maintaining, and even increasing our greatness, to any extent consistent with human imperfection; if we have, in the two preceding chapters, anticipated what might be our ultimate degradation, whilst in the first we had pointed at the heights to which we may reasonably aspire; let us not think it unworthy our attention to inquire how we can alone answer our high destination, revive what we have lost, attain what more is within our reach, or having attained it how we may perpetuate the inestimable blessing.

We have at length, though with a slow and reluctant movement, begun to provide a national education for the children of the poor. Prejudice held out against it with its accustomed pertinacity,—knowledge would only make them idle, ignorance would preserve subordination, the knowledge of their duty would impede the performance of it. This last we did not perhaps say in so many words, but was it not the principle of our conduct? We put off the instruction of the poor till the growth of crime made the rich tremble. We refused to make them better till they grew so much worse as to augment the difficulty, as to lessen the probability of their reform. The alarm came home to the opulent. They were afraid for their property, for their lives; they were driven to do what had long been their duty not to have left undone. But they did it not, 'till the overflowings of ungodliness made them afraid.' They discovered at length, that ignorance had not made better subjects, better servants, better men. This lesson they might have condescended to learn sooner from the Irish rebels, from the French revolutionists. We have at length done well, though we have done it reluctantly. We have begun to instruct the poor in the knowledge of religion.

But there is another class, a class surely of no minor importance, from whom too many still withhold the same blessing. If, as is the public opinion, it is the force of temptation which has produced so much crime among the poor, are not the rich, and especially the children of the rich, exposed to at least as strong temptations, not indeed to steal, but to violate other commandments of equal authority? Laws, without manners, will not do all we expect from them: manners without religion will be but imperfectly reformed. And who will say that religious reformation will be complete, whilst it is confined to a single class, or deemed at least a work of supererogation by some among the higher ranks? There are, however, many honourable exceptions, the number of which is, we trust, increasing.

Why should the poor monopolize our benevolence? Why should the rich in this one instance, be so disinterested? Why should not the same charity be extended to the children of the opulent and the great? Why should the son of the nobleman, not share the advantage now bestowed on the children of his servant, of his workman, of the poorest of his neighbours? Why should not Christian instruction be made a prominent article in the education of those who are to govern and to legislate, as well as of those who are to work and to serve? Why are these most important beings, the very beings in this enlightened country whose immortal interests are the most neglected?

The Apostle tells us, that 'he who provides not for his own house has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' If this be true of temporal, what shall be said of him who neglects to make 'for his own' a spiritual provision? Does not he far more emphatically deny 'that faith' which is violated even in the other inferior case?

If we have begun to instruct the poor with a view to check the spirit of insubordination, that spirit requires little less suppression in our own families. In all ranks it is the prevailing evil of the present day. The diminished obedience of children to parents, of servants to masters,

of subjects to sovereigns, all spring from one common root—an abatement of the reverence to the authority of God. Fathers should therefore keep up in their offspring, as long as possible, a dependance on themselves, without which they will gradually shake off their dependence on their Maker. Independence of every kind, as it is the prevailing wish, so it is the most alarming danger. With filial obedience, obedience to Divine authority will become connected; but the muzzle of domestic restraint shaken off, there will be no controul of any kind left. Might not a more exact Christian institution help to arrest the same spirit which has, within a few years, so frequently broken out in our, in many respects, excellent public schools? We mean not altogether, to censure the honourable seminaries. Do not the youth carry thither, rather than acquire there, this want of subordination? Is it not too often previously fostered at home by the habits of luxury, the taste for expense, the unrestrained indulgences, the unsubdued tempers, which so ill prepare them to submit to moral discipline? Laxity of manners and of principles act reciprocally: they are alternately cause and effect.

Tender parents are, indeed, grieved at the indications of evil dispositions in their children; but even worthy people do not always study the human character: they are too much disposed to believe this budding vice but accidental defect—a failing which time will cure. Time cures nothing; time only inveterates, only exasperates, where religion is not called in as a corrective. It is in vain to hope to tame the headstrong violence of the passions by a few moral sentences; the curb is too weak for the natural ferocity of the animal. If the most religious education does not always answer the end, what end is an education, in which religion does not predominate, likely to produce? How is the Christian character likely to be formed without the strict inculcation of religious principles, without the powerful discipline of religious and moral habits?

Parents are naturally and honourably anxious about advancing the interest of their sons; but they do not always extend this anxiety to their best interests. They prepare them for the world, but neglect to prepare them for eternity. We recal our words; they do not even make the best preparation for the world. Their affection is warm, but is short-sighted; for surely that principle which is the root of all virtuous action, of all the great qualities of the heart, of integrity, of sober-mindedness, of patience, of self-denial, of veracity, of fortitude, of perseverance in a right pursuit, is likely to produce a character not unqualified for the best services to society; for advancement in life, for fitness for the most useful employments, for adorning the most honourable situations; for we do not recommend such a religion as would make Ascetics, as would abstract men from the business or the duties of life, or from the true enjoyments of society. There seems, indeed, little necessity for guarding against evils of which we see no great danger.

Gentlemen should be scholars; liberal learning need not interfere with religious acquirements, unless it be so conducted as to leave no time for its cultivation, unless it cause them to consider religion as an object of inferior regard. But no human learning ought to keep religious instruction in the back ground, so as to render it an incidental, a subordinate part in the education of a Christian gentleman.

Some apology might be made for the natives of a neighbouring kingdom for their contempt of religion, from the load of absurd and superstitious observances which degrade it. Though even *they* might have discovered, under these disadvantages, much that is good; for they have had writers who yield to none in elevation of sentiment, in loftiness of genius, and sublimity of devotion.* Yet the labours of these excellent men have left the character of their religion unaltered.

But *we* have no such excuse to plead for the contempt or neglect of religion. Here, Christianity presents herself to us neither dishonoured, degraded, nor disfigured. Here she is set before us in all her original purity; we see her in her whole consistent character, in all her fair and just proportions, as she came from the hands of her Divine Author. We see her as she has been completely rescued from that encumbering load under which she had so long groaned; delivered from her long bondage, by the labours of our blessed reformers, and handed down to us unmutilated and undefaced.

If every English gentleman did but seriously reflect, how much the future moral prosperity of his country depends on the education he may at this moment be giving to his son, even if his paternal feelings did not stimulate his zealous endeavours, his patriotic would.

May the unworthy writer, who loves her country with an ardour which the superior worth of that country justifies; who, during a long life, has anxiously watched its alternations of prosperous and adverse fortune; and who, on the very verge of eternity, is proportionally anxious for its moral prosperity, as she approaches nearer to that state, in view of which all temporal considerations diminish in their value; may she hope that her egotism will be forgiven, and her pardon be obtained for the liberty she is taking? May she venture to suppose that she is now conversing with some individual father of a family in the higher ranks of life, and, presuming that he would permit the freedom, address him, and through him, every man of rank and fortune in the kingdom, in plain and bold language, with something like the following suggestions?

Let it be your principal concern to train up your son in the fear of God. Make this fear, which is not only 'the beginning of wisdom' in point of excellence, the same also in priority of time. Let the beginning of wisdom be-made

* What has been said here and elsewhere of France, and of the religion of France, has been said 'more in sorrow than in anger,' and with the single view of caution to our own country. However we deprecate the past, we shall still cherish the hope, that having witnessed the horrors of a political, we may one day hail the dawn of a moral revolution. A virtuous King, and an improving government, leave us not without hope that this fair part of the globe may yet rise in those essentials without which a country can never be *truly* great. May they eventually improve, in 'that righteousness which alone exalteth a nation!'

the beginning of education. Imbue the youthful mind betimes with correct tastes, sound principles, good affections and right habits. Consider that the tastes, principles, affections, and habits he now forms, are to be the elements of his future character; the fountain of honourable actions, the germ of whatever may hereafter be pure, virtuous, lovely, and of good report.

In his education never lose sight of this great truth, that irreligion is the death of all that is graceful, and amiable, in the human mind; the destruction of all moral beauty. Its foundations are in the dust, and it is a vain attempt to hope to raise a noble superstructure on so mean and despicable a basis. Tell him, that the irreligious man never looks out of self. He is his own centre; all his views are low; he has no conception of any thing that is lofty in virtue, or sublime in feeling. How should he? He does not look to God as the model of perfection.—He will act nothing that is holy, for he does not honour *his* commands; he will conceive nothing that is great, for he does not look to the Architype of greatness; there is no image of true grandeur in his soul. His mind will be reduced to the narrowness of the things to which it is familiarized, and stoop to the littleness of the objects about which it is conversant. His views will not be noble, because they are not excursive; they are confined, imprisoned, limed, entangled in earth and its concerns; they never expatiate in the boundless regions of immortality. He has no connecting link between himself and things

'Beyond this visible diurnal sphere.'

His soul is cramped in the exercise of all its noblest faculties; his heart paralyzed in its best attempts after a fugitive, low-minded virtue.

There is no true elevation of soul but what the youth must acquire by the knowledge of God as revealed in his word; no perfect example but that exhibited to him in the character of his Divine Son; nothing but the Gospel, through the grace of God, will check his corruptions, give him a sense of his accountableness, and raise his nature above the degraded state to which sin has reduced it.

It is material to reflect that nothing really preparative to his well-being in this life, and conducive to his qualification as an ornament to his country, will otherwise than forward him in his progress for another country, 'even a heavenly.' Adopt the measures which even nature and reason suggest for making him a distinguished member of human society, and it will not lessen your satisfaction, nor lower your gratitude, when you see that you have not only trained him to be a useful and virtuous citizen, but also a candidate for heaven.

Let your child be made familiarly acquainted with God's word, his providence, his controlling power, his superintending eye. Let him be taught not barely to read, but to understand, to love to venerate his Bible. Implant at a proper season, in his mind, the evidences of Christianity, in the clearest, simplest, and most explicit manner. Furnish him with arguments to defend it, for he will not fail to hear it attacked. Teach him to despise ridicule, that last resort of the bad defender of a bad cause; for he will find that those who cannot argue can sneer, and he may feel it harder to withstand the one than the other.

Inform him that in France it was the ignorance of religion which produced the contempt of it; and that both together overturned the state, by inculcating principles hostile to all virtue, fostering passions destructive of all order, and an impatience of control subversive of all government: all springing from one common source, all meeting in one common centre, a combination to throw off the government of God himself. Impress upon his young mind that important truth, that there can be no security for a state in which religion is not warmly, yet wisely taught by its ministers, cherished by its government, and believed and reverenced by the people.

There are certain traditional sayings which claim a sort of prescriptive right to be received, which pass unexamined, and are credited as oracular. Guard him against these false and sordid, but popular maxims, which, though the press may be used chiefly by the lower orders, the things themselves are practically adopted, pretty equally, by 'the great vulgar and the small.' Some vindicate speculatively loose principles, by the assertion that 'thoughts are free.' Tell your son this is not true. A Christian must endeavour to bring his thoughts to the same correct standard with his actions, and from the same awful motive, 'Thou God seest!'

There is another popular but unfounded axiom respecting the use of wealth, namely, that 'A man may do what he will with his own.' Christianity denies this assertion also. Every man has indeed a legal right to the disposal of his own property, but religion interdicts his right to spend it in vanity or vice; or if he be exempt from these grosser temptations, she still abridges his right to monopolise it. Christianity expects that the deserving and the distressed shall come in for such a proportion of his wealth as an enlightened conscience shall dictate. The divine person who refused, in a legal sense, to be 'a divider, or a judge,' over a contested property, did not fail to graft on the question he avoided answering, the imperative caution, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness.'

There is another fatal lesson which he will learn in the world, and which the natural pride of his own heart will second; namely, that to resent an injury is a mark of spirit, while to forgive it shows a base mind. The prince of darkness, in his long catalogue of expedients, never invented a maxim which has brought more generous but ill-disciplined souls to destruction.

The uncurbed desires, the unrestrained passions, to which we have before adverted, the contempt of submission, the supposed meanness of forbearance, the hot resentments not controlled betimes in the boy, may have been preparing the man for an act which may hereafter fill his whole life with cureless remorse.

Boys well born and accustomed to well bred society have a sort of instinctive notion of *honour*, which is strengthened by the conversation to which they are sometimes exposed. Seize

upon this spirit, whether instinctive or contracted, but seize it with a view to convert it to higher purposes. This popular notion of honour may seem to give dignity to the tone of his conversation, while it is inflating his heart with arrogance. It may indeed set him above doing an act which some fashionable men may agree to call base, but it will not preserve him from a duel, which these men agree to call honourable. But whatever acquittal a jury of the world's men of honour may pronounce on such a transaction, it will, by that awful decision from which there lies no appeal, by the difinitive sentence of the great Judge of quick and dead, be pronounced murder; murder of one of them in the act, of both in the intention; murder as criminal as that which brings its vulgar perpetrator on the highway to his ignominious catastrophe.

Lay hold then on this high-minded feeling, and endeavour to direct it into a purer channel. Lead his aspiring mind to higher objects. Let the hope of the favour, and the dread of the displeasure of God, expel from his heart a too eager desire to court the applause or escape the censure of irreligious men, by acts which, while they would offend his Maker, would destroy his own soul. Let him learn to distinguish between the swellings of human arrogance, and the consciousness of Christian dignity. Worldly maxims of honour are tumid, but they are not great.

There is no sure preservation from these mischiefs, but in an education formed on the religion of Jesus Christ. The principles drawn from the spirit of the Gospel, conscientiously adopted, and acted upon, would subvert all the hollow and destructive maxims of the worldly code. How many boiling passions might have been cooled, how many disappointed hearts and mourning spirits healed, how many duels, how many suicides, (both now so dreadfully prevalent) might have been prevented, by the early and unremitted application of this one grand specific.

Cultivate in your son whatever is valuable in science, or elegant in literature.—Independently of its own intrinsic worth, it will, by filling up his time and engaging his thoughts, assist in setting his mind above low and sordid tastes, and leave him little leisure or relish for the base and grovelling pursuits of sensuality. A love of learning judiciously instilled, is amongst the most probable *human* preservatives from vulgar vice; though since it is human, it can go but certain lengths as to moral benefit; and we have witnessed many deplorable instances of its failure, in minds of the highest literary attainments, for want of being under the direction of a superior principle. It is, however, a most valuable auxiliary, not only in improving the intellect and refining the taste, but, as we have already observed, in rescuing so much leisure from inferior pursuits.

But learning, be it repeated, though it invigorates the mind, will not reform it. It is a shining ornament, but not of the nature of a corrective. Moral evil is not cured, is not regulated,—nay it may even be inflamed by it, where intellectual science is made its own end, and not considered subservient to a higher. Learning will strongly teach him to despise what is worthless in composition, but will feebly lift him above what is unworthy in practice. It will correct his taste, but will not enable him to resist temptation: it will improve his judgment of the world, but will not secure him from its pollutions. Human learning will only teach him the knowledge of others, the Bible that of himself.

Let him therefore enter into the battle of the world armed with weapons from the divine armoury; stoutly furnished with motives and arguments drawn from religion, of potency to fortify his resolutions, convince his understanding, and affect his heart. Let him see in your example, that religion is neither unmanly or ungentlemanly. Accustom him not to hear the three dominant spiritual, and intellectual sins, PRIDE, SELFISHNESS, and EGOTISM, treated with an indulgence not shown to such as are more disreputable, gross, and scandalous. Against both classes the whole artillery of the Gospel is impartially levelled. Of the first, peculiar condemnation is intimated in Scripture. Of pride it is observed, that 'God resisteth the proud,' and that it is hard to be found 'fighting against God.' Against selfishness it is specifically proclaimed, that 'no man' with any pretensions to a Christian character 'liveth to himself;' that we are not to 'seek our own things,' and that we must 'bear one another's burdens.'—Against egotism a host of precepts present themselves in battle array,—'to esteem others better than ourselves, to avoid vain glory, to look on the things of others; to be slow to speak, ready to hear.'

Though these interior and mental sins are as much cherished by impiety as those which are coarser and more notorious, yet as the latter can produce no plausible pretence for their indulgence; as they cannot be qualified by any sophistry, nor covered by any artifice, they are less likely to hold out to the end. Morality is disgusted by vulgar vice, by the practical sins of the sensual man; but mere morality can never extirpate the vices of the heart and mind: it is not always her aim, nor if it were, could she accomplish it.

In your conversation with the young person, do not be satisfied to *generalize* religion. Religion is an indefinite term, a vague word which may be made to involve a variety of meanings, and to amalgamate a number of discrepancies. It may release a man from all the prescribed institutions of Christianity; it may set him loose from all its peculiar doctrines and restraints; turn him adrift, and dismiss him to his choice between the 'Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,' of the sceptical poet. Since life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel, a *general* religion is no religion at all. His must be the religion of the New Testament. Be not ashamed to teach your son the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you believe that there is no other name under heaven by which yourself can be saved, you must be assured that there is no other salvation for your son. Defer not then too long to communicate to him the distinctive peculiarities of our faith. Other notions will occupy the space which you leave vacant. O! stamp the right impressions on his heart while it is soft, tender, and ductile; and he will hereafter mix these early imbibed feelings, and sentiments,

and principles, with his other sweet associations, his other pleasing recollections of the vernal season of life; cherished images! which the matured mind is fond of retracing, and which commonly remain vivid when most others have faded, or are obliterated.

Fancy not that these acquisitions and pursuits will blight the opening buds of youthful gayety; that they will check his vivacity, or obstruct his amiable cheerfulness. The ingenuous unvitiated mind is never so happy as when in a state of virtuous exertion, as when engaged about some object to which it must look up; something which, kindling its energies raises its views; something which excites the ambition of lifting it above itself.

Much less fear that the pursuits here recommended will depress his genius; it will exalt it; his mind will find wider room in which to expand; his horizon will be more extensive; his intellectual eye will take in a wider range; the whole man will have an ample region in which to expatiate. To know that he is formed for immortality, is not likely to contract his ideas, or to shorten his views. It is irreligion which shrinks and shrivels up the faculties, by debasing the spirit, and degrading the soul.

And if to know that he is an immortal being will exalt his ideas, to know that he is an accountable being will correct his habits. If to know that 'God *is*' will raise his thoughts and desires to all that is perfect, fair, and good,—to know that 'God is the rewarder of all them that seek Him,' will stimulate him in the race of Christian duty;—to know that there is a day in which God will judge the world, will quicken his preparation for that day.

As he advances in age and knowledge, impress upon his mind, that in that day of awful inquisition he must stand unconnected, single, naked! It is not the best attachments he may have formed, the most valuable societies to which he may have belonged, that will then stand him any stead. He must therefore join them now with a pure and simple intention;—he must not seek them as something on which to lean, as something with which to share his responsibility—this is his own single undivided concern. It is vain to hope that by belonging to any society, however good, to any party however honourable, he can shrink from his own personal, individual, accountableness. The union of the labourers gives no claim to the division of the responsibility. In this world we may be most useful among bodies of men; in the great judgment we must stand alone. We assist them here, but they cannot answer for us hereafter.

From his Bible, and from his Bible only, let him draw his sense of those principles, of that standard by which he will hereafter be judged; and be careful ever to distinguish in his mind between the worldly morality which he may learn from the multitude, and that Christian holiness which is the dictate of the Scriptures, and of the Scriptures alone. Teach him to discover there, he cannot discover it too soon, that it is not a set of proverbial moral maxims, a few random good actions, decorous and inoffensive manners, the effect of natural feeling, of fashion, of custom, of regard to health, of desire of reputation, that will make a truly valuable character. This is not to be acquired by certain popular virtues, or rather fractions of virtues; for there is no integral virtue where there is no religion. Pleasing manners will attract popular regard, and worldly motives will produce popular actions; but genuine virtue proceeds only from Christian principles. The one is efflorescence, the other is fruit.

After all, though you cannot by your best exertions, seconded by the most fervent prayer, without which exertion will neither be rightly directed nor successfully prosecuted, command success; yet what a support will it be under the possible defeat of your fairest hopes, that you strove to avert it! Even if, through the prevalence of temptation, the perverseness of his own nature, and the malignity of his corruptions, the barbarous son *should* disappoint the best founded hopes of the careful parent; what a heartfelt consolation would it afford you, under this heaviest of all trials, that the misconduct of the child is not imputable to the neglect of the father! The severest evil—and this perhaps is the most severe—is supportable, when not aggravated by the consciousness that we have contributed to bring it upon ourselves. Though it will not pluck the sting from his guilt, it will render the poignancy of your own anguish more tolerable.

But let us indulge higher hopes and brighter prospects for our country. We refer to those hopes with which the first chapter of this little work concluded, namely, the rich provision which God has put into our hands for accomplishing his great designs in our favour. The hope therein expressed, and the means humbly suggested for accomplishing it, was the re-formation of the British character. We have here, feebly indeed, but honestly, shown what obviously appears to be the best security, the most effectual barrier, against the vices and contamination of our prolonged continental intercourse. Religious education, with God's blessing upon it, which every truly Christian father will not fail to invoke, is all in all towards the restoration, the elevation of our national character. And let it never be forgotten, that it is the education of the rich which must finally determine the fate, at once of rich and poor; and by consequence, which must determine the destiny of our country.

Here then is Britain's last, best hope; and when we consider the unparalleled advantages we possess in a learned and orthodox clergy, who instruct us in the sanctuary, and who preside over our public and private seminaries, why need we despair? Why need we doubt, that the Christian religion, grafted on the substantial stock of the genuine British character, and watered by the dews of heaven, may bring forth the noblest productions of which this lower world is capable; though neither the security nor the triumph will be complete till these 'Trees of Righteousness' are transplanted into the paradise of God.

Reader if you are indeed a Christian father, anticipate in idea that triumphant moment, when, having cast your crown at the foot of the

eternal throne, you shall be called upon to give an account of your own conduct, and, as far as had depended on you, of that of your offspring. Think of the multiplied felicities of meeting, in the presence of God, those whom your example and instruction have, through his grace, contributed to bring hither! Think what it will be, to be able, amidst all the hosts of heaven, amidst the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect—think of being able to say to the Universal Father, 'Behold, I and the children thou hast given me!'

ON DOMESTIC ERRORS

IN OPINION, AND IN CERTAIN PRACTICAL HABITS.

On Soundness in Judgment, and Consistency in Conduct.

As a preliminary to the following pages, the writer begs leave to observe, that it consists rather of miscellaneous observations on a variety of topics, than in an attempt at a systematic view of religion or morals. It does not pretend to present an exhibition of Christian doctrine, or to prescribe the duties of a Christian life. It is presumed that the generality of readers who shall honour these pages with their attention, are already, in a greater or less degree, religious characters; consequently, standing in little need of such information as her humble talents could have imparted. But as religion is become a subject of increasing and more general interest, it may not be unseasonable, as we proceed, to point out some of the dangers to which the less advanced Christian may be liable, as well as some of the evils which may subsist with high outward profession. To those who are beginning to see the importance of religion; and of such persons, adored be Almighty goodness! the number is rapidly augmenting; to those interesting characters, may the writer venture to address a few words of affectionate and respectful counsel? Carefully encourage the first dawning dispositions of piety in your heart, cherish every indication of a change in your views and an improvement in your sentiments. Let not the world, nor the things of the world, stifle the new-born principle, nor make you ashamed modestly to avow it.

But while you cultivate this principle by every possible means, avoid the danger of fancying that your religion is confirmed when it is scarcely begun. Do not conclude that a complete change has been effected in your heart because there is a revolution in your opinions, and a favourable alteration in your feelings. The formation of a Christian character is not the work of a day; not only are the views to be changed, but the habits to be new moulded; not only is the heart to be convinced of sin, but its propensities are to be bent in a contrary direction. Be not impatient, therefore, to make a public disclosure of your sentiments. Religion is an interior concern. Try yourselves, prove yourselves, examine yourselves, distrust yourselves. Seek counsel of wise, established, sober Christians. Pray earnestly for more light and knowledge, and especially for perseverance. Pray that you may be able to go on with the same zeal with which you set out. Of how many may it be said, 'Ye did run well—what hindered you?' You ran too fast; your speed exhausted your strength; you had not counted the cost.

Carefully distinguish between the feverish heat of animal fervour, and the vital warmth of Christian feeling. Mere youthful energy, operating upon a newly awakened remorse for a thoughtless life, will carry the mind certain lengths; but if unaccompanied with humility, repentance, and a continual application for a better strength than your own, this slight resource will soon fail. It is not that principle which will encourage progress; it is not that Divine support which will carry you on to the end. The Christian race is not to be run at a heat: religion is a steady, progressive course; it gains speed also: progress quickens the pace; for the nearer the approach to the goal, the more ardent is the desire to reach it. And though, in your further advance, you may imagine yourself not so near as you did when you first set out, this is not really the case; you have a lower opinion of your state, because you have obtained higher views of the spirituality of the law of God, and a more humbling sense of your own unworthiness. Even the almost Christian prophet seems not to have been previously so deeply convinced of sin, as, when overwhelmed by the glory of the Divine vision, he exclaimed, 'Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!'

The person who addresses you has seen some promising characters sadly disappoint the hopes their early stages in religion had excited. By taking too high a tone at first, they not only lost all the ground they had gained, but sunk into indifference themselves, accompanied with a prejudice against serious piety in others. They not only became deserters, but went over to the enemy's camp. Avoid this error. The world is too much disposed to impute rashness, presumption, and enthusiasm to the purest and most correct religious characters. In your instance let them not be furnished with any ground for this censure by your deserving it. If you advance, you glorify God, and promote your own salvation; if you recede, you injure the cause you now intend to serve, and bring upon yourselves a fearful condemnation. Self-abasement, self-examination, and prayer, are the best preservatives for all who have entered on a religious life, and are especially becoming incipient Christians.

There is one thing we would more particularly press on the important class we are now taking

the liberty to address;—*it is the cultivation of a sound judgment.* Of all persons religious persons are most bound to cultivate this precious faculty. We see how highly the great Apostle of the Gentiles valued it. In directing the spiritual labours of his beloved young friend, in stirring him up to every good word and work, he does not forget this exhortation:—'*The Lord give thee a right understanding in all things!*' Again, he prays for his beloved Philippians, 'that their love may abound more and more in *knowledge* and in all *judgment.*' And in his Epistle to the youthful Bishop of Crete, he repeats the admonition to young persons of both sexes to be *sober minded.* These admonitions acquire great additional force when it is considered, that he who gave them was a man of exceeding ardency of temper, and of zeal without a parallel. This experienced saint must have frequently seen the danger of imprudent piety, of self-confidence, of a zeal not regulated by knowledge; and therefore presses the great importance of a *sound judgment.*

Judgment is to the faculties of the mind, what charity is to the virtues of the heart; as without charity the latter are of little worth, so without judgment talents are of little comparative use.

Judgment, with the aid of God's Spirit, and the instructions of his word, is the balance in which qualities are weighed, by which the proportions of our duties, and the harmony of our virtues, are preserved; for it keeps not only the talents in just subordination, but the principles in due equipoise. When exercised in subservience to the Divine rule, the faculty becomes a virtue, and a virtue of a higher order. It restrains irregularity, it subdues vanity, it corrects impetuosity, it checks enthusiasm, and it checks it without diminishing zeal.

One of the most powerful defenders, not only of our church polity, but of our church doctrines, has had the renown of all his great qualities so absorbed in the quality we are recommending; or, rather, this was so much the faculty which maintained his great talents and qualities in their due order, that we never read the name of Hooker without the previous application of this weighty epithet—THE JUDICIOUS.

Judgment is so far from being a cooler of zeal, as some suppose, that it increases its effect by directing its movements; and a warm heart will always produce more extensive, because more lasting good, when conducted by a cool head.

We speak of this attribute the more positively, because it is one, which, more than many others, depends on ourselves. A sound judgment, indeed, is equally bestowed with other blessings by Him from whom cometh every good gift; yet it is not, like the other faculties of the mind, so much born with us, as improved by us. By teaching us to discern the faults of others, it warns us to avoid them; by detecting our own, it leads to their cure. The deepest humility is generally connected with the soundest judgment. The judicious Christian is watchful against speculative errors, as well as against errors in conduct. He never adopts any opinion because it is new, nor any practice because it is fashionable; neither does he, if it be innocent, reject the latter merely for that reason. Judgment is, in short, that quality of the mind which requires to be kept in ever wakeful activity, and the advantages it procures us, will be more apparent, the more it is kept in exercise.

Religious charity more especially demands the full exercise of the judgment. A judicious Christian will double the good done, by his selection of the object, and his manner of relieving it. All things that are good are not equally good. A sound judgment discriminates between the value of the claimants which present themselves, and bestows on them more or less attention, according to their respective claims.

Above all, an enlightened judgment will enable you to attain and to preserve CONSISTENCY, that infallible criterion of a highly finished Christian character, the want of which makes some really religious persons not a little vulnerable. It was this want in some of his people, which led an eminent divine, at once a man of deep piety and lively wit to say, that 'there were some good persons, with whom it would be time enough to be acquainted in heaven.' So much to be regretted is it, that goodness of intention is not always attended by propriety in the execution.

In another class, the want of consistency makes not a few appear over scrupulous as to some minor points, and lax in others of more importance. These incongruities not only bring the individual into discredit, but religion into disgrace. When the world sees persons, whose views are far from high, act more consistently with *their* avowed views, and frequently more above them, than some whose religion professes to be of a loftier standard, they will prefer the lower, as exhibiting fewer discrepancies, and less obvious contradictions.

Consistency presents Christianity in her fairest attitude, in all her lovely proportion of figure, and correct symmetry of feature.—Consistency is the beautiful result of all the qualities and graces of a truly religious mind united and brought into action, each individually right, all relatively associated.—Where the character is consistent, prejudice cannot ridicule, nor infidelity sneer. It may, indeed, be censured, as holding up a standard above the attainment of the careless. The world may dislike, but it cannot despise it.

In the more advanced Christian, religion may seem to be less prominent in parts of the character, because it is infused into the whole. Like the life blood, its vital power pervades the entire system: not an action of the life that is not governed by it; not a quality of the mind which does not partake of its spirit. It is diffused through the whole conduct, and sheds its benign influence, not only on the things done, but on the temper of the doer in performing them. The affections now have other objects, the time other duties, the thoughts other employments.—There will be more exertion, but with less display; less show, because the principle is become more interior: it will be less obtrusive, because it is more rooted and grounded. There will be more humility, because the heart will have found out its own corruptions.

By the continual exercise of the judgment,

and an habitual aim at consistency, the Christian, though animated, will be orderly. He will be less subject to the ebullitions of zeal, as well as to the languors of its decay. Thus, through the joint operation of judgment in the intellect, and principle in the heart, the religion is become equable, regular, consistent.

There never was but one visible exhibition of infallible judgment and complete consistency. In that Divine person who vouchsafed to pitch his tent among us, and to dwell with men on earth, that He might give us a perfect example in his life, before He obtained salvation for us by his death—in Him alone was judgment without any shadow of error, consistency without any speck of imperfection. His divine perfections none can approach; but all may humbly imitate those which come within the compass of his humanity.

On Novel Opinions in Religion.

Among the numerous innovations of this innovating age, it is deeply to be lamented, that religion should come in for so large a portion. Of this we have a melancholy instance in the system of the new secession.—Many are distorting the sacred doctrines, and slighting the practical ethics of the New Testament. The religion of the Gospel is employed to furnish arms against itself. The truth as it is in Jesus, is fearlessly controverted: its sanctity is no security; its Divine authority is no protection.

In the new system—strange to say! the hardihood of the sceptic is adopted for the professed purpose of purifying Christianity. The dogmatism of the unbeliever is employed for improving our faith in the religion which the unbeliever denies!

This heterogeneous system composed of different elements, made up of conflicting principles, unhappily is not brought forward by the avowed opposers, but by the professed and zealous friends of Christianity;—by religionists placing themselves much above the standard of their former pious associates, with whom they once went to the house of God as friends; by Christians so critically scrupulous, that they can no longer go to that house at all.

Novelties in the sciences and in the arts may be, and generally are, beneficial. Every invention may be an improvement; but in religion they are delusions. Genuine Christianity is not, as one class of men seem to suppose, a modern invention; serious piety is no fresh innovation. 'That which was from the beginning declared we unto you,' are the words of inspiration; the new and living way, therefore, now so much depreciated, is only a continuation in the good old way so long ago recommended by the prophet.

Nor is Christianity, as the recent party seem to suppose, a superannuated thing, which wants repairing; nor is it an incomplete thing, which wants filling up; nor is it a redundant thing, whose excrescences want lopping; nor a defective thing, whose deficiencies must be supplied; nor an erroneous thing, whose errors must be expunged.

But to do these malecontents justice, they do not resemble those reformers who are contented to expose the defects of an existing system, without providing a remedy. This restoration, this purifying, this repairing, this expunging, this lopping, this grafting, this perfecting, they have actually and gratuitously taken into their own hands, with a view either to improve the old religion, or, as their progress rather threatens, to produce a new one; while the champions of the antiquated system all agree that 'the old is better.'

Some Christians of the primitive ages were not then, perhaps many of the present age are not now, aware, that he who overleaps the truth, errs as widely as he who falls short of it; nay, the danger is even greater, as it is more difficult to recede than to advance. It was the vain desire of overturning established truths, of being wiser than the wisdom of God, of being more perfect than the perfection of the Gospel, of giving new glosses to old opinions, and rejecting all opinions which did not hit their own distempered fancies; together with the temptation of being considered as the founders of a new school,—which gave rise to the Ebionites, the Cerinthians, the Marcionites, and various other sects; and which has continued to this day, to introduce successive heresies into the church of Christ.

Of the two classes above mentioned—those who think true religion a novelty, and those who are endeavouring to introduce a novel religion, though they are the very antipodes of each other, yet it is difficult to determine which has wandered most widely from the truth. Scylla has it wrecks as well as Charybdis. Though each thinks that the only way to safety is to recede as far as possible from the other, yet, by this increasing desire of mutual recession, they are in more danger of gradually approaching to each other, if not of finally meeting, than either intended or believed at first setting out.

In one quarter we hear the most consoling of all doctrines—the doctrine on which the great hinge of Christianity turns,—rejected as false, and its defenders derided, as if they were adopting it to be a substitute for virtuous practice. We hear one community spoken of by its professors as triumphantly bearing away from all others the proud distinction of *rationality*. It is a monopoly not to be allowed. If by rational religion is meant a religion singularly adapted to rational beings, no church on earth has a fairer claim to the appellation than the Church of England. It is rational to exercise our reason in examining and weighing the evidences of Christianity; and, having clearly proved the authority on which they are grounded, it is then rational to submit our reason to its doctrines. It is rational to believe that we are apostates from our original brightness; not only because we perceive it to be a scriptural doctrine, but because we see it in all around us, and feel it in all within us.

It is rational for a being conscious of its weakness, to desire to lean upon something that is strong; we therefore lean upon a rock, and that rock is Christ. Our church is a rational church;

for it is sober without coldness, and animated without enthusiasm. Its service unites the affections of the heart with the faculties of the mind; it teaches to pray with the spirit and with the understanding also. Though it lays hold with a firmly grasping hand on the blessed doctrine of the atonement, yet it is so far from using this doctrine as a pretence for neglecting virtuous practice, that it draws from thence new motives, new sanctions, new encouragements. It teaches that without shedding of blood there is no remission for sin, while it declares that without repentance, and without holiness, there is no salvation for sinners.

The sound members of this church acknowledge that there are mysteries in our religion; but the same reason which employed its best energies in proving the Divine authority of Scripture, has convinced them that the secret things which belong to God must be adored now, and will be fully understood hereafter. The legitimate members of the church, for she has, it is to be feared, some spurious ones, are not surprised that in a revelation from heaven there should be mysteries, but they believe that these sacred mysteries are meant as exercises of faith to the probationers for Heaven; are meant to promote humility; which *they* consider, whatever others do, as a grand fundamental in religion. They do not pretend to know in what manner the Holy Spirit operates on the human heart; but they know that it does operate, because it produces that change of heart which they are not ashamed to call the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and which distinguishes the vital from the nominal Christian. They leave to those who have sufficient natural resources in their own minds, if such there be, to reject assistance which *they* fervently implore; assistance without which they, who think they stand, may finally fall.

These humble dependants on Divine grace come at length to attain, in addition to the external evidences of Christianity, an internal evidence in their own bosom, which, so far from giving them any elation of heart, any eccentricity of doctrine, any irregularity of conduct, preserves them from each while it affords them 'all joy and peace in believing.'

But while we put in the fair claim of our church to rational religion, we do not make an exclusive pretension to this, or any other excellence. Every human institution bears on it some marks, greater or less, that it is human, of course imperfect; and it is sufficient to guard *us* against the folly of such a pompous assumption to know, that an erroneous church not only assumes the appellation of *infallible* itself, but gives it also to its infirm, mutable, human head, to a being certain of death, and liable to sin.

But if we do not claim soundness as well as rationality, for our exclusive possession, we are more likely to perpetuate both, than the best societies of separatists. All that is good in our church is likely to be secured to it by the fence of an establishment. An enclosure is not so likely to be broken in upon from without, as a society planted in the waste. We are likely, I say, to be secured from the introduction of new dogmas, as well as to be preserved in our long adopted principles. The pale which encircles our church, and the formularies which belong to it, do not leave it open to the experiments of new projectors, to the incursions of fresh innovators. Above all it is enriched by a great mass of the Divine treasures of Scripture; the spirit of which is also expanded in our collects and prayers, so that, as we have observed in another place, if the pulpit should in any instance unhappily degenerate in doctrine, the desk will still furnish a perpetual antidote. It may indeed deserve the name of the *establishment* not only as being the rational religion, but as being built on the foundation of the everlasting Gospel, on the doctrines taught by prophets and evangelists, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

In another of the quarters alluded to, the more novel system, we hear much of opinions but little of practice; much of doctrines, but little of holiness; much of faith—a disproportioned and unproductive faith—but little of repentance. These grand ingredients, which, when severally coupled together, make up the sum and substance of Christianity,—these joint essentials, which Saint Paul preached invariably, and which by never separating, he preached effectually, are now considered as separate interests, and severed from each other as having no necessary connection.

We are very far from the injustice of accusing those who propagate doctrines which are evidently unscriptural, of being themselves unholy. In some of the leading characters we fully believe the contrary to be the case; but the obvious effect of such doctrines on those who hear them, is not only to lessen their value for practical preaching, but to lead them to consider personal holiness as making no part of the things which accompany salvation.

Those who are at all acquainted with ecclesiastical history, must know that in the most flourishing ages of the church, even when Christianity was best understood and most successfully practised, errors of opinion most readily started up, the ephemeral fungus of a luxuriant soil; they were frequently the suggestion of fanciful and mistaken, rather than of immoral men. Our great spiritual adversary, who successfully employs the *vicious* as the corruptors of morals, knows it to be a stale and fruitless device to make them his agents for misleading the judgment and bewildering the imagination; and therefore, by a refinement of ingenuity, prompts the more virtuous to the accomplishment of spiritual mischiefs. Moral men are his selected instruments for broaching novel, enticing, and dangerous opinions. These moral but wayward persons seem to have overlooked the fine supplication of the Apostle, that God would "establish, strengthen, settle them." These terms, which indeed are not synonymes, but shades:—these terms, a noble climax, implying not equality, but gradation, are now inverted. Every move in the new machine seems to shake, weaken, unsettle. One pin in the old system is pulled out after another, till the whole magnificent fabric, if its security depended on them, would fall to the ground. The patriarch Jacob has shown us in the character of his vacillating

son Reuben, how destructive instability is of excellence.

We are assured that the change in these ever varying theories are so frequent, that to confute them would be as difficult as unnecessary; for that which by some of the party is insisted on in one week, gives way in the next to some wider deviation; so that he who might wish to animadvert on some existing evil must be as rapid as its inventor, he must

'Catch ere it fall the Cynthia of the minute.'

If in religious contemplation or discussion, we once give the reins to fancy, if we cherish every seducing thought, merely because it is new, if we set up for complete independence of opinion, if we assume individual release from all the ties that hold Christian society together, if we permit ourselves to plunge into the unfathomable ocean of discovery, without compass or rudder, there is no saying where we may land; it may be on the shore we now dread. Many of these leaders differ in opinion, but each seems to lay as exclusive a claim to truth as the Pope himself; but as the latter was equally infallible when there was one Pope at Avignon and another at Rome, so the infallibility here seems to be lodged by each in himself, only with this variation, that these last begin by differing from each other, till in their more advanced progress they come to differ from themselves.

Is not the recent secession founded on a kind of spiritual democracy, an overturning system; an aversion to whatever is established; a contempt of authority; an impatience of subordination, a thirst for dictatorship; with this difference, that these religious dissidents loose the rein of their self-government, instead of those of their country.

We know to what a degree the love of novelty, the longing to see any thing they have not seen before, though the object be ever so disgusting, is carried by our countrymen. The poet who best knew human nature, who best painted the characters of Englishmen, said, 'In England any monster will *make* (be the making of) a man.' This is so true, that a dwarf, a giant, an unnatural birth in an animal, will afford delight; the greater the distortion the higher the pleasure. We have seen to what excess this passion for what is novel and monstrous may be carried, in the instance of a late preposterous prophetess, a creature born and bred among the dregs of the people, with nothing to recommend her but ignorance, presumption, extravagance and blasphemy; yet did this woman not only make numberless proselytes among her vulgar equals, but obtained advocates among those from whom better things might have been expected. But it is the very absurdity which is the attraction. Such preposterous pretences being obviously out of the power of human means to accomplish, the extravagance is believed to be supernatural. It is the impossibility which makes the assumed certainty. The epilepsy of Mahomet confirmed his claims to inspiration.

Extravagance in religion is a kind of spiritual empiricism, which is sure for a time to lay hold on the vulgar. The ignorant patient in both cases, who frequently pays little attention to the established physician, is sure to be attracted by any new nostrum from the laboratory of the irregular prescriber: he is resorted to with more confidence in proportion to the reputed violence of his catholicon; and he who despised the sober practitioner, swallows without scruple the most pernicious drug of the advertising professor.

Without the slightest desire to detract from the personal character of our new empirics in divinity, we may be allowed to suspect that their education, and early habits of life, had not altogether qualified them for the arduous undertaking of new modelling a church. It is true, that 'the erudition of a (common) Christian man' is not required to be very profound, but surely that of a Christian reformer should be something more than moderate.

The lapse of three centuries has added little clearness to the lucid exposition of Christian truth as exhibited in the writings of those reformers by whom the doctrines of the Church of England were modelled. Whatever defects might have escaped the notice of those eagle-eyed sifters and examiners of Christian truth, when they rescued it from the rubbish under which it lay almost buried, would not these defects have been detected, pointed out, rectified, by the penetrating mind of Bishop Jewel in his renowned challenge at Paul's Cross, or in his celebrated Apology for the Church of England? Would they not have been expunged or purified by the judicious Hooker, that bulwark of the establishment, in his immortal writings on *ecclesiastical polity*, and on *justification*? Would they have eluded the observation and correction of Archbishop Usher, that prodigy of erudition?

We need not be again told the well-known fact, that there may be abundant learning where there is little enlightened piety; but in these glorious champions of the faith of Christ, and of the Protestant church, learning was only a secondary excellence. Various and profound as were their acquirements, they were conscientiously devoted to the purpose of advancing and confirming the scarcely established church. Can we believe that Ridley, Hooper, Cranmer and a long list of such distinguished men, would have made the sacrifices they actually made, without scrupulously examining into the momentous truths they professed to believe; that they would have suffered the most cruel tortures, rather than renounce the doctrines of a church to which they were first ornaments and then martyrs?—'There were giants in those days:' but to say no more of them, nor of the succession of profound divines and eminent scholars who succeed them, 'men of stature also'—would it not be casting a severe reflection on these bright luminaries of our country and church, to believe that the great truths of the gospel which were hid from these skilful and acute indagators, were reserved to be brought to light by half a dozen persons in the nineteenth century; that to men, most of them bred to secular pursuits, and living antecedently in secular habits, should be reserved the honour of detecting, not trifling faults, not imperfections from which perhaps no human institution is exempt, but radical errors, but fundamental mischiefs, affecting the very vitals of our reli-

gion? If these evils really exist, if they indeed escaped the penetration, eluded the vigilance, and mocked the wisdom of those mighty champions, then to say those holy men were blameable, is saying little: they were indeed ideots, voluntarily to suffer a violent death, rather than renounce a church too erroneous for the new reformers, not only in which to preach, but in which to remain.

The penetrating sense of Luther seems not only to have exposed all existing, but to have anticipated all future heresies, especially when he inveighs against that which declared that '*The Ten Commandments ought to be taken out of the Church!*'

The Coryphœus of the doctrine of faith, in contradiction to the new system, says: 'Faith is by no means an ineffective quality, but possesses so great excellency, that it utterly confounds and destroys all the foolish dreams and imaginations of sophisters; but if works only are taught, faith is lost.' 'But if nothing but faith is inculcated, carnal men begin to dream that there is no need of good works.' Again: 'If, indeed, faith saves us without works, let us have no anxiety about good actions; let us only take care and believe, and we may do what we please. It is true,' adds he, 'that Paul tells you, that faith without works justifies; however he also tells you, that a true faith after it has justified, does not permit a man to slumber in ignorance, but that it worketh by love.' Again: 'You now see, that though it is faith alone which justifies, yet that faith alone is not sufficient.'

There is not a single doctrine of the New Testament which does not involve practical consequences. The necessity of holiness, now unhappily not insisted on, is more exalted by the death of Christ than by all other means that ever were devised. God's hatred of sin is more forcibly expressed by the sacrifice of his Son, than it could have been by any other method, although we do not presume to set limits to infinite power.

Yet this most glorious doctrine, this cleanser from all sin, may be converted by the manner in which it is administered into an open door to that licentiousness which it is its special design, its obvious tendency, and when truly received on scripture grounds, its natural consequences, to cure.

But if men came to the perusal of the Bible with certain prepossessions of their own, instead of a simple and sincere desire after Divine truth; if, instead of getting their obliquities rectified by trying them by this strait line, they venture to bend the strait line till it fits their own crooked opinions; if they are determined to *make* between them a conformity which they do not *find*, they are not far from concluding that they *have* found it. By such means, a very little knowledge, and a great deal of presumption, has been the ground-work of many a novel and pernicious system.

Systems, indeed, there will be as many as they are novel and pernicious; for though men are as tenacious of error, for a time, as if their convictions were as strong as they could be if it were truth, yet the persuasion of error is not likel to be so lasting. As no error can be so irresistible as a known truth, it cannot long carry the same weight with it. He who adopted it, at length finding it not to go, as we say, on all fours, is more likely to plunge into a succession of errors, each deeper than the other, than to return to the truth which he has abandoned. Whether the pride of not going back, or the hope that, in his wider wanderings, he may extricate himself, it is hard to say; for error is as endless as truth is powerful.—Some minds are so constituted, that it is easier to them to produce objections to truth, than to embrace it; they therefore resist truth, when they might resist the obstacles which prevent their receiving it. Our adoption of error as naturally proceeds from our abuse of reason, as our adoption of truth from the right use of it. The question, to a plain Christian, seems to be settled by this declaration of our Lord: 'He that doeth His will shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.'

As, in many of those to whom we have been alluding, their aberrations seems to have been occasioned rather by the vagrancy of the imagination, than the corruption of the heart, we are not without hope that they may yet retrace their steps; that the way they have lost may be recovered; that their involution in this labyrinth may not be past extrication; that Divine grace may furnish a clue to lead them back to the plain, obvious, intelligible meaning of the unsophisticated word of God. That this may be the case, is the cordial wish and prayer of many who loved and respected them before they were unhappily led astray, by erratic fancies, into these seducing theories.

There is no method which the subtle adversary of mankind has not devised to injure religion. When the church is at a low ebb, when she is sunk in forms and outward observances; when zeal is asleep, and all seems safe because all is still, he sometimes rouses her, but it is to wrong purposes: it is not to advance the interests of Christianity, but to bend his force against some symptoms of its returning spirit, which begin to creak out: these symptoms of incipient zeal he calls enthusiasm, though an evil which perhaps, in that stage of the church, does not exist; he, however, strives to prevent the existence not of enthusiasm but of zeal, that the frigid may enjoy their doze, and not be reproached by the threatened exertions in the quarter which is beginning to open its eyes.

At another period when the church is beginning to be triumphant, he sends out his favourite engine, persecution, with his fagot and his axe, burning where he could not refute, and subduing by force what he could not silence by argument.

He is now pursuing a different course.—The same malignant spirit which once laboured to drive men from Christianity by martyrdom, now draws them from it by sophistry. He now deteriorates truth instead of persecuting it; and as the process is less revolting, it succeeds better. Men are no longer terrified into error, but coaxed into it. They are not frightened, but wheedled out of their belief. Their understandings become so bewildered, that they are persuaded that every new advance in heresy is a fresh step to-

wards truth. Advantage is made even of their prejudices, which become more deeply rooted by the very change which they are made to believe is to extirpate them. New converts, who once valued themselves on their incredulity, have become credulous to excess; and those who were previously indifferent to sober religion, are led to swallow the wildest perversions of Christianity, to adopt opinions which she as heartily rejects as she did their former unbelief.

Some subjects are placed out of the reach of the human mind. Presumptuous spirits lose themselves by attempting to pierce through forbidden bounds; by endeavouring to explain things beyond the limits of created comprehension, they subvert the truth they pretend to serve, they involve themselves in the very difficulties they undertake to clear. The humble Christian, like the seraphim, 'covers his face' before the infinite Majesty of Heaven, and exclaims, 'O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' 'Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.'

We are not called upon to unravel intricacies, but to hold fast the form of sound words. While to the ill-informed these new teachers appear profound because they are unintelligible, they remind those of better judgment of certain animals, who, burrowing in shallow ground, just beneath the surface of the earth, fancy they are deep only because they are dark.

Many a metaphysical reformer, by the manner of conducting his system, so exposes and defeats his own cause, as to resemble in fate, though we say not with any similarity of invention, the Neapolitan atheist Vanini, who, with eleven others of the same class (we presume the number to be a match for the twelve apostles) endeavoured to establish a regular college of infidelity. The object was nearly the same with that of the late atheistical school in France; and by having the priority of two centuries, they robbed that recent rabble of the meritorious claim to original wickedness.

Vanini's object was to exterminate the very idea of a God, and for this he adopted a most singular method. He undertook to prove there was no God, by stating the general idea of God. He strangely fancied that to define the idea was to destroy it; and that to pretend to say what God is, was the surest way to disprove his existence! His definition is so artfully made out, and part of it so ingeniously written, that while he thought he was drawing only the creature of his imagination, it appears as if he were enthroning rather than deposing his Creator. A marvellous delusion to argue against the being of God from the very magnitude of his perfections! Let the delirious metaphysics of modern times alone, and we had almost said they will also argue themselves into the abyss of forgetfulness.*

We want more simplicity in the exercise of our religion; we want to be reformed by it, and not to reform it; we have need to be sent back to our first rudiments. We should imitate the plainness and uncomplicated method of the New Testament, where the doctrines are few, but of importance inestimable, infinite, eternal! We should examine the grounds of our faith by this unerring guide, and not by the pullulations of our own visionary fancies. We want to be sent back to elementary principles. We need not even think it beneath our wisdom to be directed by that familiar summary, the Apostles' Creed. It were well if we fixed our own faith by the articles comprised in, and enclosed by, that safe compendium instead of turning it over to our children as if we were got above its beggarly elements. Even the way-faring man cannot stray while he is contented to keep close within this hedge.

Many do not virtually adopt its first simple declaration, 'I believe in God;' for to believe in God on the Christian scheme, is not merely to believe in a first cause, is not merely to believe in His existence, we must also believe in His attributes, His promises, His threatenings, His Son, His word, His Spirit; to believe in those attributes especially which harmoniously meet in the glorious union of truth and mercy, the blessed combination of righteousness and peace in the person of his Divine Son; those promises which are eternal life to as many as keep his commandments; those threatenings which say to the ungodly, 'Depart from me I never knew you;' that holiness without which no man shall ever see his face.

A bad principle is of much more extensive mischief than a bad example; the latter it is true, like a conflagration, has a tendency to destroy whatever comes within its reach; but a pernicious principle, like the variolous matter, may be conveyed to any distance, and infect the patient, though he had never come in contact with him from whose eruption it was taken. 'It is time for thee, Lord, to lay to thine hand, for they have destroyed thy law!'

But it is not the entertaining a dangerous opinion, it is the rage of proselyting to new opinions, which constitutes the most malignant part of the mischief; an erroneous doctrine not propagated, hurts none but him who holds it; but by propagating it to unsettle the minds of multitudes to deteriorate the Gospel, and to disturb the peace and unity of the church, is surely no light evil, especially in a country like ours, proverbial for its credulity and love of novelty; and in a church like ours, which has been reformed, sifted, and purified, beyond the example of any other in the Christian world.

The everlasting edifice of the Gospel is founded on a rock, whose stability neither storms can shake, nor waves undermine.—Nor can any contrivances of man improve the beauty of its superstructure. Its depths cannot be fathomed by our short line, nor its height fully apprehended by our short sight! Christianity then is no appropriate field for the perplexities of metaphysics, nor the industry of new discoverers. This brief title of the Bible—THE WORD OF GOD—excludes the censures of all cavillers, annihilates the emendations of all critics!

It is with unfeigned sorrow the writer has witnessed the rise and progress of the new community. If she knows any thing of her own heart, the preceding remarks have not been dictated by a censorious spirit. But it may be said,

* For a further account of this metaphysical atheist, see Mr. Saurin's sermon on 'The deep things of God.'

she was not called upon for any such impertinent animadversions. The probability of such a reproof makes her feel horself obliged to account for the liberty she has taken.

Those who have condescended to look into her former writings, need not be reminded, that she has through life, in a considerable degree, though not exclusively, devoted her humble talents to the service of her own sex; and has conscientiously, though feebly, laboured to be useful to their best interests in every way she could devise. She has endeavoured to strengthen them in the pursuit of what was right, and they have had the goodness to bear with her when she has reminded them of any aberrations from that pursuit.

Though the deep interest she has taken in their credit and their welfare has by no means invested her with a right of interference on the present painful occasion, yet it would not have been consistent with her antecedent practice, to overlook a circumstance in which they are so deeply involved.

It has excited the most lively feelings of regret in many minds, to hear, in a recent instance, of the departure of some ladies of consideration, from that reserve and delicacy so peculiarly the characteristics of their sex, and so naturally appendant to their own respectable characters and situation in life.—They appear not only to have entered very warmly into all the tenets of the seceding school, but to labour very assiduously for their propagation. They are, it seems, not only followers, but joint leaders in the several departments of the government of the seceding party.

Tenderness of heart, warmth of feeling, and liveliness of imagination, form a most interesting part in the composition of an amiable woman; but the qualities which adorn, are also the qualities which mislead. The very attractions which cause them to please, may become snares. If not carefully directed, they give a wrong bias to the character, and a dangerous tendency to the conduct. They lead their possessor more widely astray than is commonly the case with those who are destitute of these pleasing powers.

That providential economy which has clearly determined that women were born to share with men the duties of private life, has as clearly demonstrated, that they were not born to divide with them in its public administration. If, then, they were not intended to command armies in war, nor to direct cabinets in peace, to legislate in the senate, or debate at the bar—doubtless they were not intended to be public teachers of religion, to be makers of canons for a new church, nor to invent dogmas to controvert an old one; nor to be professors of proselytism, nor wrangling polemics, nor conductors of controversy, nor settlers of disputes—disputes which will continue to be agitated as long as men have hot heads and proud hearts; as long as they possess vanity or curiosity, impatience of restraint, or a love of opposition; a weariness of sober truths, and a thirst after the fame to be acquired by their subversion.

Why will women of sense, then, defeat their providential destination? why desert their proper sphere, in which they were intended to benefit, to please, even to shine at least as stars of the *second* magnitude? Why fly from their prescribed orbit? Why roam in useless and eccentric wandering,

'And, comet-like, rush lawless through the void,'

and then, having for a season astonished with their false and momentary blaze, fall disregarded and forgotten?

These well-meaning ladies would be among the last to use their allotted measure of grace and accomplishment to any purpose which they believed to be improper; yet they require to be told, that neither should their talents be exerted to the purposes of spiritual seduction; that they should not be employed to disturb the faith, to shake by dispute, or weaken by persuasion, the steadiness of persons who, without their endowments, are perhaps in a safer state.

But though the writer cannot hope that these observations will produce any effect on those who have already embarked on this sea, without a shore, and without a bottom—happy would she be, if they might become the means of preserving one inexperienced female from the perils to which novelty, curiosity, and pressing invitation too easily allure. The sure preservatives from this danger are to cultivate deep humility and self-distrust, to keep clear of the very threshold of innovation, to avoid the first step; for all the subsequent ones are easy. Let her bear in mind, that, once seduced, she may find, that 'when she would inherit the blessing, she may be rejected, and find no place of repentance, though she may seek it carefully with tears.'

Ill effects of the late Secession.

Among the evils to which the late secession has contributed, those we are about to mention are of no light nature. It has been the means of exciting a sort of spiritual vanity, of awakening a desire of departing from received opinions, in certain young persons, who may be designated by the name of premature instructors. It has increased the alienation of the lower orders from the church; it has afforded to some who are not favourable to serious piety, a pretence for indiscriminately classing together men of different views, characters, and principles.—Among the more respectable, it has stirred up a spirit of debate and controversy by no means friendly to the cause of genuine Christianity. We shall mention these effects in their order.

There is scarcely a greater mistake in morals, than is committed by those who habitually speak of vanity as a trifling fault, as a small pass not worth guarding. There is perhaps scarcely an error which is so generally adopted, and so carelessly overlooked. It finds its way into characters of every species, and almost into every individual of the species. There is not only the vanity of beauty, of rank, of riches, of learning, of talents, but, as we have already observed, the vanity of religion.

A bold familiarity with Scripture, an unhal-

lowed touching of the sacred ark, not as formerly by sceptics and scoffers only, but by persons professing, and we believe intending to be religious, are, it is to be feared, becoming too common. This, like many other of our offences, has its foundation in vanity. It is obvious that an unwillingness to be taught, and an impatience to teach, marks the character of the present day.

There is a scion from this presumptuous stock, which perhaps has not had sufficient time to grow, in order to become generally known, but which is beginning to sprout up in certain provincial towns and villages. There is a growing disposition in a few arrogant young men to read the Bible with their own glosses and interpretations, and to aim at proselyting, and 'taking captive' not only 'silly women' but silly girls. Several of these persons, as soon as they began to open their eyes on the importance of religion, or rather before they were broad awake to its truths, have undertaken this gratuitous tuition. Instead of taking time to promote their own advancement, instead of learning wisdom by an increasing discovery of their own ignorance; instead of improving in Christian knowledge by the only legitimate methods, diligent study of the Bible with the aid of the soundest commentators, both accompanied with fervent prayer for that light they profess to seek,—without consulting able ministers—without taking this straight and obvious road,—on their own very slender stock they set up for teachers themselves. Instead of looking to the experienced and the wise, they collect a little group to look up to them, thus inverting the Apostle's observation—*for they* 'when for the time they seek to be teachers, have need to be taught themselves, which be the first principles of the oracles of God.' If this spiritual vanity should flourish, we shall soon have none to learn; all will be teachers.

Thus the raw and rash Christian, confidently jumps over all the intermediate steps between the enquirer and the instructor, and despising the old gradual approach to the sacred temple, despising the study of books, of men, and of himself, starts up at once a full-grown divine; —the novice seizes the professor's chair, erects himself into a scholar without literature, and a theologian without theology. On the strength of a few texts, ill understood, and worse applied, he undertakes to give his young neighbours new views of the Bible, and without eyes himself, sets up for a guide of the blind.

These young persons in reading the Scriptures seem to be setting out on a voyage of discovery of something new, rather than on a course of observation on what their precursors have done for them. They search, not with devout enquiry, but fearless curiosity; they look out for passages written in a different connection, and applied to different purposes, and then try to prove that they produce not consecutive reasoning, that they do not establish the generally received doctrines. How should they? They were never intended to produce the one, or to establish the other. They bring together propositions which have no relation, and which require different proofs, and then triumph in the supposed opposition of what was never intended to agree.

'Thus fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'

Suffer a few friendly hints. Though Holy Scripture was given to be searched, it was not given to be criticised. It was 'written for our learning,' not for our cavilling; it was given not to be partly scrutinized, but to be 'inwardly digested;' not to make us wise in our own conceits, but 'to make us wise unto salvation.' It is not to be endured to hear questions on which hang all our hopes and our fears, speculated upon as if they were a question of physics or history, and explained till they become contradictions.

Men taught of God, and possessing those depths of erudition which qualified them to teach others, depend upon it, have left nothing for your discovery except the discovery of your own insufficiency. If there are obscurities they will not be cleared by such shallow expositors. The sun of righteousness will not be made to shine brighter by the light of your farthing candle.

Boldness in religion, we repeat, is one of the great evils of the present day. The more we cavil the less we shall obey. We may explain truths till we come to deny them. We may be so involved in intricacies of our own weaving, that we may end by opposing the doctrine we undertook to clear. Oh! there is no security like a humble mind; a mind always distrusting its own wisdom, and always confiding in the wisdom of God.

Why, then, will not the premature instructor wait till he is himself instructed? Why not look up for information on difficult and disputed points to wiser and older heads? Why not in their little parties turn their attention to practical points, rather than to speculative niceties? Why not cultivate that self-inspection and heart-humbling prayer which would cure those conceits that lead to a critical, and often end in a sceptical spirit; such habits would best preserve them from that inflation of heart which arises from the vanity of some supposed new discovery, in a religion which was given us by the Spirit of God.

The Scripture no where teaches us to indulge this audacious curiosity; it stirs up no eagerness for pushing speculation beyond its legitimate bounds. It furnishes no invitation for ranging beyond the limited sphere allotted to our imperfect human condition. Its incitements are not irritations but encouragements. The Bible wisely represses all that spiritual vanity which would dive into unprofitable, because impenetrable mysteries. It teaches us all that is necessary for us to learn, and there it stops. It teaches what is of prime importance for us to know,—that we are fallen creatures. It shows what we ought to *believe* in order to our being rescued from this state of apostacy. It instructs us in all that is necessary for us to *do* to be restored to the favour of God, which by sin we had forfeited. It is enough that it lays open the disease, presents the remedy, and offers God's Holy Spirit to render it effectual. In short, it reveals all that as probationary beings

we should desire to know, and of all we know it expects us to make a practical use.

The present is, especially among the lower ranks, an age of rebuke and blasphemy; and what is so likely to augment the popular hostility to Christianity, and neglect of the established church, which is founded upon it, as when they see some of its ministers reprobating at one time, the church which they warmly defended at another?—when they see them actually renouncing it as unchristian, and setting up a new system in opposition to it? Where, then, is truth to be found, may not even the more sober amongst the people say, if it is not found in that church, in defence of which so many of her divines, so many of her bishops, were led to the scaffold and the stake? Will not the loose and careless be likely to be confirmed in impiety, when they see these men, who were fostered in her bosom, who had subscribed to their belief in her articles, who had been warm beyond their fellows in the admiration of her liturgy, her doctrines, and her discipline,—when they see these men not only desert her altars, but take up arms against her; when they behold a perpetual conflict between Christian ministers?—for a church that is attacked must be defended—will they not think that an establishment which is so frequently assailed, which requires such continual vindication from which there are so many recent deserters, must needs be an erroneous and unsound church, and even the Scriptures on which it is founded, uncertain, if not false?

What is so likely as this defection to give confidence, without the least intention of doing so, to that spirit of infidelity which used to skulk in corners, and stab from behind a mask, but now avows itself boldly, bares its unblushing front to public gaze, spurns at law as well as decency, openly defies government, whom it used to fear, as well as God, whom it never feared?

Was it not enough that these low, designing demagogues—men who think one religion as good as another, and no religion best of all,—was it not enough that these open violators of order, truth, and justice, should, as the most probable means to accomplish their political mischiefs, endeavour to overturn the church, by bringing her creeds, and her other holy services, into contempt; insulting, by their profane parodies, all that is grave, and rendering ridiculous all that is good? Yet, from such men, such attempts excite our regret and astonishment less than those we have been contemplating. How grievous is it, when persons of a totally different description are, perhaps undesignedly, contributing to help on the work which, we are persuaded they abhor!—when decorous and religious men, though by other devices, and with other weapons, may be contributing to accomplish the work of these vulgar politicians, and assisting, in no inconsiderable degree, to discredit the church which the others are labouring to subvert!

Nay; in one respect the better men are doing the worse deed; for the factitious assailants of the church injure those alone who were injured before; for, by the grossness of their attacks, they shock all who are not tot up to impiety; while, in the present those more decent characters are more be led astray, who have shown some disp to be serious; and are, therefore, in more ger of being misled by the specious subtleties, and the assumed tone of confident security, of these religious dogmatists.

The inexperienced and the wavering—those who are unconfirmed in their principles, together with others who have their religion to seek, and who like to have one pointed out to them which will not disturb their repose by the severity of its practical injunctions, nor the self-denying spirit of its tendencies, are likely to be led astray by these false lights; while the sober and self-distrusting Christian will only be driven, by these alarming novelties, to adhere more closely to the humbling and consistent doctrines of the New Testament,—will, with deeper prostration of heart, implore the aid of the Holy Spirit, not only to lead him into all truth, but to *keep* him in it. Such a one will find that it does not require profound knowledge, or deep learning, to perceive the awful dangers of the presumptuous innovations which lead to those perilous subtleties—which terminate in these bold conclusions. He will see that common sense, an humble mind, and a competent acquaintance with Scripture, are all that is wanting to discover that the Bible, and the novelties of the seceding community cannot both be right.

But the evil does not end here; for some of the adversaries of serious piety, are, it is to be feared, disposed to take a most unfair advantage of this secession; and the very circumstance of that separation which ought to have rescued men who firmly adhere to the church, and to the principles on which it is founded, from suspicion, increases it, and causes them to be involved in one common charge of extravagance and error, with men whose opinions they abhor; whereas, when the vessel is assailed by an unexpected storm, instead of throwing themselves out to sea in quest of imaginary safety, the tempest only makes the experienced Christian mariner cling the closer to his hold. Men of more than ordinary zeal and activity, then, should not be suspected of disaffection, unless they afford other, and more substantial reasons, for doubting their want of orthodoxy. Does it not look as if there were no soundness but in apathy, no security but in inertness?

One of the great evils of the times is rash judgment, indiscriminate attack, and a zeal for censure without examination; a not separating men who are materially dissimilar, but lumping them into one common reprobated mass, or, at best, speaking as if the difference were so little, that it was not worth the pains to separate them.

Perhaps there are no church communities in the world, that do not hold some doctrines in common. We are identified in some important points with the Church of Rome; but that does not blind us to its errors, nor does it prevent our keeping clear of them.—There are both rational and orthodox communities in our own country; but our holding some opinions in common with

them, neither makes us adopt those opinions which we disapprove, nor condemn those who profess them, as if they held none that were right. Why, then, should not the case be the same in our own church?

This lumping system is not a little hard on the steady and orderly divine. It weakens the hands of the faithful pastor, when his auditors, who have just been hearing him speak the words of truth and soberness, find him, perhaps, in the next controversial pamphlet they take up, coupled with the half insane, and the wholly absurd. It is hard that the zealous Christian, who is at the same time a pattern of propriety and correct demeanor, should be dragged in to make common cause with those at whose principles he shudders. Yet these men of opposite characters, principles and pursuits, are forced into contact, are together plunged into the crucible of undistinguishing prejudice, and melted down together; all distinctions so lost in the fusion—the sober Christian so mixed with the fanatic, the temperate with the fiery, the regular with the eccentric, that they come out of the furnace blended into one common mass, and are reproduced as if formed of one common material.

Ours is also pre-eminently an age of controversy. Is not charity sometimes recommended with uncharitableness, and religion vindicated irreligiously? But are there not a thousand other subjects better calculated for its legitimate exercise? 'Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth,' on all other topics; but here, though one dash the other in pieces, he does not always escape unhurt himself. But shall the word of 'the High and Holy One, the word of Him who sitteth on the circle of the earth,' be made an arena for the combats of its puny inhabitants, whom the prophet represents by the most contemptible insect?

But although, as we have already observed, if truth be attacked, it must be defended, the Christian controvertist never engages in offensive war. He does not fight for victory, but truth. And the surest way for him to ascertain this, is, to examine the temper with which he defends it. Rivalry is not his motive, nor is railing his weapon.

If, as it is said, warfare is the natural state of man, let his hostility among Christians be directed to a foreign enemy; let them not engage in civil war. You have already 'provoked each other to good works,' which is part of the law; go on, and provoke each other to 'love, which is the fulfilling of the law.' Let both sides rejoice in the good done, without caring which does it. 'There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh in all.' If there is so much done separately, what a mighty mass of good would be produced by cordial co-operation? Let me not be accused of levity in applying the words of the poet,

> The Douglas and the Percy both together,
> Were confident against a world in arms.

We know that, in the sight of God he is not the most successful champion who may have given most falls to his adversary; but he who has obtained the most victories over his own spirit. And he will be found, in the great and tremendous day of reckoning, to have been the most valiant sodier of Jesus Christ, not who has been the fiercest combatant in the field of controversy, but who shall have brought most glory to God, and most soul, to heaven.

If we made, as surely we ought to make, the Holy Scripture our standard of judging, as well as of believing, of charity as well as of faith, of brotherly kindness as well as of orthodoxy;—if we brought the Bible to be the constant arbiter of our debates, as well as the professed rule of our lives, we should attack nothing with warmth but what that Bible condemns. All differences of opinion in which God has not set to His seal that it is false, should be treated with candour; men should not then make their own 'purged eyes' the universal medium of clear vision, they should not vilify others for seeing the same topics with other optics. Want of charity is probably no less a fault than the one we may be reviling; and does not a want of discrimination, or rather does not that blindness which is inspired by prejudice, lead to that deficiency in candour which widens the difference? To profess opinions of which Scripture neither commands nor prohibits our belief; ought not to set at irreconcilable variance beings who are equally candidates for heaven. In that abode of perfect peace and perfect love, no small portion of the promised felicity may arise from our being of no party.

A difference in opinion on points on which the Holy Spirit has been silent, on which no declaratory sentence in Scripture has been pronounced, is surely no ground for the triumph of superiority in those who maintain them, nor for supercilious contempt in those who reject them. Is it not putting matters of minor importance in the place of essentials? while perhaps by the disputants on both sides, essentials are not always held with so firm a grasp, or at least are not debated with such unkind pertinacity.

We have hitherto alluded to difference of opinion between pious men, men who are in earnest in their religion. But are there not men of little piety to be found, who side with one or the other party, and become the hottest controvertists, while they take little real interest in vital religion; who oppose without belief, and defend without conviction, merely because they wish to be appended to that side which they happen to think the most creditable, most popular, or most profitable?

Let us then love in each other now what God loves in us, and bear with the rest.—The cultivation of this spirit of kindness would so sanctify the temper, that we should forgive and overlook those inferior matters in others, which might not exactly coincide with our own views and opinions.

These discrepancies in sentiment are perhaps permitted for mutual advantage; and the cultivation of a candid disposition may be carried to a wider extent, and a spirit of forbearance in action, than if there were no such thing as diversity of sentiment. By the consent and reciprocal operation of this spirit of Christian kindness, we shall be made more meet for that state where all will be of one mind as well as one heart

where charity will have its full consummation, and forbearance its full reward.

Let us then prepare ourselves, and each other, by the exercise of the one for the fruition of the other. Let God be all in all now, as He will be hereafter, and there will be no room left in the heart of a Christian for animosity, or unkindness towards his fellow Christians. A cordial agreement in those essentials to which the Gospel has annexed salvation, should swallow up all the present petty, but dividing distinctions. —Could this most desirable object be accomplished, then should we hope to see a renovation of that spirit which, in the early ages of the church, provoked even its enemies to exclaim with admiring wonder, *See how these Christians love one another!*

On the Exertions of Pious Ladies.

We are now about to tread, which we do with a fearful and timid step, on tender ground. It is with mingled respect and reluctance we venture to touch on certain delicate points which affect the sincerely pious; persons who equally avoid all eccentricity in doctrine, and negligence in practice; yet among whom little errors may hereafter creep in, the very consequence, perhaps, of that increasing and inestimable blessing, religious society. It is to be feared they may incur the hazard of raising in others objections against religion, by their honest zeal to promote it.

The persons to whom we presume to allude are of that sex, in which, perhaps, most piety is to be found, and who are in so many respects essentially advancing its cause.—Their services are so materially useful, that it would be a subject of deep regret, if, by any slight inadvertence, their value should ever be diminished. We are too often led to complain of *deficiencies* in religion; we are now to speak—not of its excess, for we believe there is no such thing—but rather to guard the truly pious against the possibility of inconveniences, which, should they arise, would be a diminution of their usefulness.

The thoughtless and dissipated indeed, who haunt unsocial crowds, and lay out their talents for that world which they have chosen for their portion, find their reward where they seek it, in the admiration of that world where they flutter and shine.—The others patiently wait for theirs in that single sentence, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' Yet though it is painful to say a syllable which might look like disapprobation when only caution is intended, may we hazard a few words, not of censure but of friendly intimation?

May not those large portions of time, and strength, and spirit, so generously spent abroad by zealous Christians, in the most noble exertions of religious charity, be sometimes suffered to entrench, in some measure, upon the imperious course of domestic life, upon those pleasing and sacred duties for which HOME is a name so dear? May they not be so exhausted by external concerns, that they may be in danger of entering with diminished interest on the retired exercises of the closet. All business, even religious business, is apt to produce a hurry and bustle in the mind, and an agitation in the spirits, which the most serious persons lament, as being attended with some disqualification for personal improvement. 'My mother's children gave me their vineyards to keep, but mine own vineyard have I not kept,' was the pathetic lamentation of the ancient church. They had engaged her in labours and difficulties which she feared had in some measure impeded the progress of her own spiritual concerns. It was in her own house, at Bethany, that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus. We fully admit, however, not only the complete *compatibility*, but the expediency, of uniting what we owe to those abroad, and to ourselves and families at home; the highest characters are those who combine both. We are not combatting, but applauding a zeal, which we fervently hope may never be suppressed, if it should ever require to be somewhat regulated.

There is no part of Christian duty which more requires us to look well to the motive by which our actions are set a-going. It is of importance to examine whether our most useful, if busy pursuits, are not influenced by a natural fondness for bustle, an animal activity, a love of notice. Whether even the charitable labours grow not more from a restless spirit than from real piety. Let us observe, however, that though these defective motives may at first excite the zeal of some, yet by a perseverance in well-doing, assisted by humble prayer, the motive may at length become as pure as the act is undoubtedly right.

It is asserted, but we trust with more severity than justice, that there is a growing tendency in some truly excellent persons to introduce show and display in their religion; a tendency, not quite consistent with the interior, spiritual nature of Christianity. It is not so much an evil *we* are guarding against, as the appearance of evil. Their sex, like their religion, is of a sober character; and the tendency to which we are alluding, may create a suspicion that religion, even among good people, is not so much considered as a thing between God and their own soul, as we know it really is; for we are far from suspecting the secret communion with their God and Saviour is not considered as their primary duty. And we are willing to believe that the effect of this duty will always be visible in producing that sobriety and simplicity, which so conspicuously, and so beautifully distinguish the religion of the New Testament.

The religion of Jesus is utterly without parade, it effects no publicity. It is enough for his servants to believe that their heavenly Father, who sees them in secret, sees them with an approving eye.

As they have got above acting from the fear of man, the next step is to get above acting for his praise;—the excessive applause and commendation of their Christian friends begin, in reality, still more to be watched against than the reproach of the irreligious. The one teaches them to be circumspect, the other may in time induce them to believe that circumspection is no longer necessary. This negligence, if it do not make them do wrong, may lead them to be too much elated with doing what is right.

But there are higher motives for the use of discreet reserve in the Christian's mind than what regards merely their personal character. However pure in motive, however innocent in action, they must be careful not to have their good evil spoken of. They must be scrupulously cautious of not bringing the least reproach on the cause dearest to their affections. Pious persons cannot but know, that with the utmost care to avoid adding to the offence, which Christian truth, however discreetly exhibited, necessarily gives, that many are looking out for pretences to discredit not only the professor but the profession itself. But if they should hereafter see any of those improprieties for which they are looking out; if any indiscretion should be found where it is sedulously sought, Christianity would suffer and impiety triumph.

We sincerely hope that certain sharp-sighted observers, who are keenly on the watch for any thing that may discredit serious piety, who are peeping in at every crevice, through which they think they may detect any real or supposed ground of censure, may never be gratified with the discovery of what they so industriously seek. But it is obvious, that where they can detect no substantial fault, they take comfort in finding a foible; where there is no deformity they triumphantly carry away a blemish, and are ready to make the most of the slightest imperfection. And a speck which would not be perceived in an ordinary form, is conspicuous on that which is white and pure.

This, by a little perversion, and not a little exaggeration, not only of fact but of conjecture, is propagated till it becomes a mischief. In the detection of the slightest flaw in characters of eminent piety, they go away rejoicing, as if they had found some hidden treasure. And it is well perhaps, even for the best Christians, that there are such critical inspectors; and the knowledge that they are watched will answer an excellent purpose, if it set them on watching themselves.

Am I then an enemy to Christian exertion? God forbid! It is the glory of our age, that among the most useful and zealous servants of our Divine Master, are to be found, of 'devout and honourable women not a few.' Ladies, whose own education not having been limited to the harp and the sketch-book, though not unskilled in either, are competent to teach others what themselves have been taught; who disdain not to be employed in the humblest offices of Christian charity, to be found in the poorest cottage, at the bed-side of the sick and dying; whose daughters, if not the best *waltzers*, are the best *catechists*; whose houses are houses of prayer, whose closets are the scene of devout meditation; who, not contented with the stinted modish measure of a single attendance on public worship, so contrive to render the hours of repast subservient to those of duty, as to make a second visit to the temple of their God; and who endeavour to retain the odour of sanctity, shed on the sacred day, through the duties of the week.

But to pursue the subject in a different, though not distant direction, we cannot too much commend those valuable persons, whom neither fortune, rank, nor any temporal advantages have been able to seduce to follow those vain pursuits, whose light, and, in some cases, dangerous amusements, so eagerly sought by the votaries of pleasure. We cannot but admire, that all these energies which others are wasting in idle diversions, or employments little better than idleness, are, by those excellent persons, devoted to purposes of religion, and religious or useful charities.

If, indeed, like the females attached to the new school of theology, they deserted the established proprieties, and prescribed decorums, which have ever been considered as the safeguard, as well as the ornament, of their sex; if they assisted to propagate novel opinions; if they undertook to share the office of directors in spiritual concerns; if they diverted to public purposes, the talents given them for the more appropriate and subordinate, but not less useful offices of private life; if they attempted to clear difficulties in divinity, which the wisest and most learned men had approached with awe and reverence, and had receded, for fear of 'darkening counsel by words without knowledge; if they undertook to decide between contending creeds while they considered the commandments as antiquated—new-modelling the one and rescinding the other without ceremony; if they allowed themselves to determine the right and the wrong on points too abstruse, not only for female, but even for human intelligence, to decide upon, and to get rid of those they did not like or did not comprehend; if they had quitted plain, practical, intelligible religion, for misleading theories, and, like the apostate Galatians, 'removed from Him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel;' if all these things had taken place, then they would indeed deserve even more censure than they have incurred; then, though we should pity their error and lament their apostacy, we should be among the last to apologise for the one, or excuse the other. It has been brought, as a charge, against the valuable ladies whose cause we are advocating, as if it were a departure from the delicacy of the sex, to attend at the annual meetings of certain religious and charitable societies; but we know not what reasonable objection can be made to their being modest and silent auditors on these occasions. They do not attend the resort of the unemployed or the ill-employed—they do not attend to hear the idle news of the neighbourhood, but to hear 'good news from a far country,'—news, which the angels in heaven stoop down to hear,—not the conversion of one sinner, but the conversion of many,—to hear that best news, the extension of Christianity to the extremities of the globe,—to hear that

> 'All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
> Flock to that light;'—

To hear

> 'That eastern Java to the farthest west,
> And Ethiopia spreads abroad the hand,
> And worships!'

Compare now these inoffensive and quiet auditors, with the gay multitudes of their own sex

which crowd the resort of pleasure.—Here, they are the peaceful listeners; there, they are the busy performers. The others are not, as here, passive recipients of entertainment, but the entertainers, but the exhibitors. Yet, who among the worldly censures one of these classes? who, among the prejudiced does not censure the other?

So much for the difference in the *act;* let us examine the difference in point of *time;* for, as in our pleasurable pursuits, the consumption of time, that precious material of which life is made, forms a very considerable object, it cannot be thought unfair to compare the two classes on this ground.

Did the pursuits of both, in point of health, sobriety in dress, security of morals, preservation of delicacy, more nearly approach each other than the most strenuous advocate for dissipation can pretend; yet the prodigious inequality of the two as to the waste of time, must settle the matter at once with those who know the value of this fugitive, this irretrievable talent.

Compare then the few hours in the day, and the very few days in the years, given up by the one to these serious pleasures, with the uncounted hours of the countless nights, spent by the other in the *anti-social* crowds of turbulent pleasure—spent, we will not say in the *midnight* parties, for that would give a false impression of the season of those amusements. The midnight hour was heretofore used proverbially to express *late* revelling.—But from the present inversion of hours, that would give an idea not only of dulness and vulgarity, but it would also rather designate the hour when company met, than when they parted. Midnight was once the time which *closed* the scene of dissipation; it is now that of *commencing* it. And it is scarcely extravagant to say, that the morning frequenters of the charitable meetings join them not many hours after the others return from the scene of their unquiet pleasures. In the one case, no neighbourhood is kept awake by unseasonable noise and knockings, no servants are exposed to corruptions abroad, nor robbed of quiet rest at home.

To turn from the metropolis to the provinces. Compare the little absences from home of ladies who inspect the concerns, and give instruction to the poor, with the long and frequent desertion of another class, not of home only, but of country!

Upon the whole though we would carefully guard against both, yet we must confess, in the present state of things, it is not so much a little excess in zeal in one quarter, as the visible growth of dissipation in another, which 'has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished;' and truly happy should we be, if the pen of the ready writers, so frequently employed against the minor, would occasionally be exerted against the greater excess.

* * * * * *

The opening of the nineteenth century has been a period for the display of extraordinary energies, exerted in every sort of direction. They had been powerfully exerted in bringing on the late revolution. All the energies of France, whether in science, talent, wit, or wealth, were combined in one huge engine for the establishment of atheism on the proposed ruins of Christ and his kingdom. We hope this grand device was partly foiled, even *there*. In the general assault some skirmishes were fought in this country; but here a counter-attack was made. 'Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels, and prevailed.'—'The accuser of the brethren was cast down.'

Afterwards the human scourge of mankind in the same foreign country, by a singular energy of character, aided by an unprecedented combination of circumstances, to which the previous contempt of religion had led the way, projected the most exorbitant enterprises, and accomplished them by the most successful perseverance in every species of political and moral mischief. In imitation of one whom the enormity of his crimes would almost warrant us in calling his grand inspirer, his labours were perhaps more energetic, because 'his time was short.' Here again Michael made a counter-attack on the dragon. For it is to the same powerful energies, exerted in the contrary direction, that we may ascribe those numberless noble, and beneficial societies at home, which promise to effect a moral change in the condition, not of one country, not of one Continent, but of the whole Globe, and by which we hope finally, through the Divine blessing, 'to beat down Satan under our feet.'

But this has not only been a period for exerting the energies of countries and communities. They have been exerted under different situations by different characters, and to opposite purposes, by individuals; they have been remarkably exhibited in private persons, in a sex where energy is less expected to break out into fearless action; in Charlotte Corday, in Madame Roland, and other political enthusiasts abroad, all acting with the spirit of the heroines of pagan Rome, and actuated by a religion much resembling theirs.

At home, the best energies of the human mind have been exerted to the best purposes, by private individuals also, and exerted without any departure from modesty, prudence, and simplicity, the sacrifice of which would ill repay the accomplishment of the most popular action.

It would be unpardonable in our remarks on well-directed energies, to pass over one instance, on which, we trust there cannot be two opinions. If some of the novelties of the present period are its errors, others are its glory. It is cheering to the wearied pilgrim, in traversing the desert of this sinful world, to have the eye here and there refreshed with a verdant spot, yielding not only beauty, but fertility.

In alluding to certain recent undertakings which reflect honour on our country, it would be unjust to omit one which reflects honour on our sex. Justice, as well as gratitude, would be wounded, were no tribute to be paid to the most heroic of women.

The reader will have anticipated that we allude to the female Howard. Hers is almost (her sex considered) a higher strain of Christian heroism. Unprotected and alone, she dared to venture into scenes that would appal the stoutest

heart, and which the single principle alone by which she was actuated could have sustained hers. With true Christian courage, she ventured to explore the dreary abodes of calamity and crime, of execration and despair. She took 'the guage of misery,' not as a matter of curiosity, or philosophical speculation, but with the holy hope of relieving it. The favour of Him who stopped the mouths of the lions in the prophet's den, stopped those of these scarcely less savage beings. Her mild demeanour awed their rebellious spirits into peace.

Her visit was not the sudden ebullition of a charitable fit. It was the result of deliberate reflection, and doubtless of fervent prayer. She had long been projecting the means how to assist these most desperate and forlorn of human kind. She had conceived a hope, that what was flagitious might not be incorrigible; and adopted a well-digested plan for their religious instruction.

But she knew human nature too well, not to know that religious instruction would be very inefficacious, without correcting inveterately bad habits. Together with a few pious and able associates of her own sex,* she instituted a school of reform and industry, found manual employment for those who had never worked, and Christian instruction for those who had never been taught. The lips that had been seldom opened but to blaspheme their Maker, were taught to praise Him; the hands hitherto employed in theft were employed in honest labour. Infants, in a doubly lamentable sense, born in sin, and bred in vice, were snatched from a destruction which had appeared inevitable, and put into a train of improvement. The gloomy mansion which had lately been a scene of horror, only to be exceeded by those more dreadful future mansions to which it was conducting them changed its face. The loathsome prison which had witnessed nothing but intoxication and idleness; had heard no sounds but those of reviling and of imprecation, gradually became a scene of comparative decency, sobriety, and order.

If ever a charity of so extensive and public a nature could have been pleaded as some excuse for the remission of domestic duties, this might have been considered as the one exempt case, but it was not so. If she stole some hours from her family to visit the prison, she stole some hours from sleep to attend to her family.

Happily, goodness is contagious as well as sin. We may now say in a *good* sense, 'Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Distant places have caught the flame. The bright example is already imitated by other ladies in some of our great towns, and will probably take a more ample range.

May we conclude this part of our subject by observing, that ladies of other religious professions would do well to copy, in certain respects, the example of the females of the society to which this distinguished lady belongs;—giving into no habits of dissipation, they have time; addicted to little expense in personal decoration, they have money; and the time and money thus snatched from vain and frivolous purposes, are more wisely directed together into the same right channel of Christian benevolence.

* Among these Mrs. Steinkopff stands in the first rank.

High Profession and Negligent Practice.

There has seldom been a period in which there was more talk of religion, than that in which we live; and we are disposed to believe, that the abundance of the heart in this instance produces its usual effect upon the lips. But it must also be observed, that, in an age of much vital religion, as it must be acknowledged this is, there will naturally be not a little false profession, or, at best, in many professors, more external show than inward piety—a religion that is sometimes more distinguished by peculiar phrases, and hot contention about opinions, than by much devotedness of heart and life.

One of the causes to which the growth of crime among our poor has been assigned, is the growth of our population; and some have undertaken to prove, that it is not because they are worse, but because they are more. This same way of judging may, perhaps be applied to the apparent growth of error in religion—that it is to be ascribed to its vast increase. As there *is* numerically a larger population in the religious ranks, may there not be naturally expected a larger proportion of error?

We now, therefore, venture a few remarks on another class of Christians, whose intentions, we hope, are not bad, though their charity is narrow, and their information small. We will distinguish them by the name of Phraseologists. These are persons who, professing to believe the whole of the Gospel, seem to regard only one half of it. They stand quite in opposition to the useful and laborious class whom we last considered. None will accuse these of that virtuous excess, of that unwearied endeavour to promote the good of others, on which we there animadverted. These are assiduous hearers, but indifferent doers; very valiant talkers for the truth, but remiss workers. They are more addicted to hear sermons than to profit by them.

Their religion consists more in a sort of spiritual gossiping, than in holiness of life. They diligently look out after the faults of others, but are rather lenient to their own.—They accuse of being legal, those who act more in the service of Christianity, and dispute less about certain opinions. They overlook essentials, and debate rather fiercely on, at best, doubtful points of doctrine; and form their judgment of the piety of others, rather from their warmth in controversy, than in their walking humbly with God.

They always exhibit in their conversation the idiom of a party, and are apt to suspect the sincerity of those whose higher breeding, and more correct habits, discover a better taste. Delicacy with them, is want of zeal; prudent reserve, want of earnestness; sentiments of piety, conveyed in others words than are found in their vocabulary, are suspected of error. They make no allowance for the difference of education, habits, and society: all must have one standard of language, and that standard is their own

Even if, on some points, you hold nearly the same sentiments, it will not save your credit; if you do not express them in the same language, you are in danger of having your principles suspected. By your proficiency or declension in this dialect, and not by the greater or less devotedness of your heart, the increasing or diminishing consistency in your practice, they take the guage of your religion, and determine the rise and fall of your spiritual thermometer. The language of these technical Christians indisposes persons of refinement, who have not had the advantage of seeing religion under a more engaging form, to serious piety, by leading them to make a most unjust association between religion and bad taste.

When they encounter a new acquaintance of their own school, these reciprocal signs of religious intelligence produce an instantaneous sisterhood; and they will run the chance of what the character of the stranger may prove to be, if she speaks in the vernacular tongue. With them, words are not only the signs of things, but things themselves.

If the phraseologists meet with a well-disposed young person, whose opportunities are slender, and to whom religion is new, they alarm her by the impetuosity of their questions. They do not examine if her principles are sound, but 'does she pray extempore?' This alarms her, if her too recent knowledge of her Bible and herself has not yet enabled her to make this desirable proficiency. 'Will she tell her experience?'—These interrogations are made without regard to that humility which may make her afraid to appear better than she is, and to that modesty which restrains a loud expression of her feelings. She does not, perhaps, even know the meaning of the term, in their acceptance of it.

Do we then ridicule experimental religion? Do we think lightly of that interior power of Divine grace upon the heart, which is one of the strongest evidences of the truth of Christianity? God forbid! But surely we may disapprove the treating it with flippancy and unhallowed familiarity; we may disapprove of their discussing it with as little reserve and seriousness, as if they were speaking of the state of the weather, or of the hour of the day; we may object to certain equivocal feelings being made the sole criterion of religion; feelings to which those who have them not may pretend; which those who have them may fear to communicate, before they have acquired a strength and permanency which may make them more decisive; we may blame such injudicious questions to incipient Christians, who barely know the first elements of Christianity.

By the apparent depth of their views, and this cant in the expression, the stranger is led to think there is something unintelligible in religion—some mysterious charm, which is too high for her apprehension. They will not hold out to her the consoling hope of progressive piety; for, with them growth in grace is no grace at all,—the starting-post and the goal are one and the same point. One of these consequences probably follows: she either falls into their peculiar views, or she is driven to seek wiser counsellors, or is led by the hopelessness of attaining to their supposed elevation, to give up the pursuit of religion altogether.

These technical religionists are so far from encouraging favourable tendencies, and 'the day of small things,' that they have no patience with persons professing hope, and despise every advance short of assurance.

To judge of them by their conversation, they seem to have as firm a certainty of their own security, as of the danger of all the rest of the world; that is, of all those who do not see with *their* eyes, hear with *their* ears, and discuss in *their* language. You would suppose salvation a very easy attainment, to see them got so much above hopes or fears.

Surely eternal happiness is not so cheap a thing, as that any should plead their claim to it on slight grounds. Some who talk confidently of this certainty, do not give strong indications in their life, of their having entered in at 'the strait gate' which leads to it. If it cost as few sacrifices, and required as little diligence, as some exhibit, there would not be so many who need doubt of their admission. Seek, strive, run, fight, labour, know thyself, humble thyself,—are imperatives not quite so easily or so generally obeyed, as to render 'the narrow way' a very crowded avenue. Self-knowledge, self-denial, self-abasement, are safer symptoms than undoubting confidence and exulting security.

The desire of hearing and speaking much on religious subjects, though Christian duties, are less unequivocal marks of improvement, than whether we love money less, and our neighbour more; whether there is any abatement in our pride, any victory over our passions; whether we are more disposed to conquer our own will, and to submit to that of God. A growth in candour, in charity, in kindness and forbearance, in meekness and self-distrust, will be the probable consequence of a close examination into our present deficiency in these amiable graces.

To these persons, the exclusive credit of their individual preacher is at least as valuable a consideration, as the glory of that God whom it may be *his* constant aim to glorify; and they do not think they exalt him sufficiently, if it be not done at the expense of others among his brethren, to whom he perhaps looks up with reverence. There is a wide difference between the kindness of praise and the grossness of adulation; between affection and worship; between gratitude and idolatry.

Since the human mind is so constituted as sometimes to require remission from its stricter engagements; since it feels the need of relaxing into some intervals of pleasure; it is no unimportant object to enquire what pleasures are dangerous, what are safe, and what may even be made instructive, even where improvement is not the professed object.

The persons in question have little turn for books; might it not usefully fill many a vacant gap were they to devote a little of their leisure to rational reading? There is much valuable literature which occupies an intermediate space between strictly religious and frothy books. History, well-chosen travels, select biographical works, furnish not only harmless but profitable

reading. The study of these would improve their views; and by expanding their minds, furnish them with topics of general conversation and useful reflection. It would enlarge their charity, by letting them see that many authors are not wicked, though they do not confine their works to religious discussion.

Whatever invigorates our capacity of receiving knowledge, whatever adds new and sound ideas to our stock, is not to be despised as useless, or rejected as sinful. Be it observed, however, that general literature must not be allowed to absorb our time, nor interfere with what is of indispensible obligation; yet, if it be clear from every thing light, sceptical, or unsound, it safely fills up the otherwise idle intervals of a religious life, which without it is liable to sink into meaner recreations, and inferior pursuits.

Objects of the first importance cannot be exclusively pursued even by higher capacities than those we are now considering. It is particularly necessary, therefore, for these last to supply their leisure with occupations which will furnish useful information, and matter of pleasing communication. For if the most elevated minds require the relief of change, much more does the ordinary and uncultivated intellect. It has but few images, which are soon exhausted, and must sink into weariness if it be not replenished by new ones.—Reading, such as we presume to recommend, might prevent the vacant mind from brooding over mysteries, which it has pleased the God of all wisdom, as well as all goodness, to hide from more enlightened minds than those we are contemplating. The want of something better to do, the want of resources of a higher order between the duties of the highest, reduces many persons to the most trifling ways of getting rid of time. They who allow of no intermediate reading between a sermon and a play, are often engaged in conversations, to which the most frivolous dialogues ever written would afford no adequate parallel: and they who would think it a sin to be studying the history of their country, are frequently, and perhaps eagerly, inquiring into the gossip of their own village, and contributing new anecdotes to its idle annals.

Many books are useful, that are not professedly religious, for we have minds as well as souls. We may be well instructed for the purpose of this world, without invading on the more important business of another.

If then they would adopt sober literature, in exchange for indolent trifling, their minds would improve in vigour, and their tempers in cheerfulness and candour. Every unoccupied mind lays itself open to the incursion of more dangerous enemies than those it intends to avoid; such a mind takes refuge in what is more injurious than the supposed evil, into which it congratulates itself that it has not fallen. A lively 'Spectator' of Mr. Addison, or a grave 'Guardian' of Bishop Berkeley, would be a pleasing resource. An 'Idler,' or a 'Rambler' of Dr. Johnson, might preserve them from realizing those characters in their own persons. Such writers would teach them the knowledge of mankind, and let them into many a snug secret which lies unmolested in their own heart. Such books might correct their taste, without deducting any thing from their stock of piety, except perhaps the phrases which disfigure it; would give them a relish for better society, and thus turn their waste moments to some profit. Be it observed, we speak of persons who have much leisure; those who have little, should give that little to the one Supreme object.

These religionists delight to speak of themselves as a persecuted people; so that a stranger not accustomed to their dialect, and having been in the habit of hearing the term applied to imprisonment, anathema, and proscription, is rejoiced when he afterwards finds it means no more than a little censure, and not a little ridicule; the latter perhaps more frequently drawn on them by their quaint phrases, injudicious language, and oddity of manner, than meant to express any contempt of religion itself.

We do not pretend to say, that there is not still to be encountered that lighter species of persecution which consists in reproach, supicion, and contempt; that there is not still an inferior kind of spiritual martyrdom, which those who would live godly in Christ Jesus must be content to suffer; a persecution which touches not the life but the fame: but this affects only Christians of a higher strain than those whom we are considering; persons who do not draw on themselves censure by their indiscretion, but by their sternness in principle, and their superiority in practice. This reproach, however, they esteem a light evil, and are contented that as it was with the master, so it must be with the servant. It is well, however, if attack makes *even them* more discreet, and reproach more humble.

In short, the religion of the phraseologists is easy, their acquisitions cheap, their sacrifices few, their stock small, but always ready for production. This stock is rather drawn from the memory than the mind; it consists in terms rather than ideas; in opinions rather than in principles; and is brought out on all occasions, without regard to time, place, person, or circumstance.

It has been triumphantly asserted, but probably with more confidence than truth, that the children of pious persons are not, in general, piously educated. We have known too many instances to the contrary to admit the charge.

Though a good man's religion cannot be always transmitted with his estate, yet much has been done, and is actually doing, towards this transmission: and if it is sometimes found that the fact is as has been asserted, it is, we suspect, chiefly, though perhaps not exclusively, to be found in the class we have been considering. It is perhaps in consistency with some tenets they maintain, that they neglect to prepare the ground, to sow the seed, and labour to eradicate the weeds; believing that education is of little use; trusting that whatever is good must come from above, and come in God's own time.

We, too, know that whatever is good must come from above; and that of whatever is good, God is the giver: but we know, also, that the ripening suns, and the gracious showers, and the refreshing dews, which descend from heaven, are not intended to spare the labour of cultivation, but to invigorate the plant, to fill the ear,

to ripen the grain, and thus, without superseding, to reward and bless the labours of the cultivator.

Auricular Confession.

There are certain topics which are almost too serious to be overlooked in an undertaking of this nature, and are yet almost too delicate to be touched upon.

Though we are far from thinking auricular confession the worst part of another church, yet we do not wish to see it introduced into our own, especially under the circumstances to which we are about to allude. There are certain young ladies of good talents, and considerable cultivation, who have introduced, what we might be almost tempted to call the coquetry of religion. —To the friendship of men of superior reputation for abilities and piety, frequently to young men; they insinuate themselves, by making a kind of false confidence. Under the humble guise of soliciting instruction, and obtaining comfort, they propose to them doubts which they do not entertain, disclose difficulties which do not really distress them, ask advice which they probably do not intend to follow, and avow sensibilities with which they are not at all troubled.

This, it is to be apprehended, is a kind of pious fraud, a little stratagem to be thought better than they are, by the lowly affectation of appearing to be worse. They ask for consolation which they do not need, for they are really not unhappy; but it is gratifying to engage attention, and to excite interest. These fanciful afflictions, these speculative discontents, after having, to the sympathising friend, appeared to be removed, are poured, with an air equally contrite, and a mind equally at ease, into the ear of the next pious, and polite listener; though the penitent had gone away from the first confessor more than absolved, the mourner more than comforted.

This confidential opening of the mind, this warm pouring forth of the soul, might be perfectly right and proper, were the communication confined to *one* spiritual director. For, here the axiom is reversed; here, in the multitude of counsellors, there is not safety but danger. If the perplexity be real, if the distress sincere, why not confide it to the bosom of some experienced female friend, or some able, and *aged* divine? There all would be right and safe; there confession would bring relief, if relief and not admiration be wanted; and where the feeling of contrition is genuine, admiration will not be sought.

If the young persons in view were not really estimable, we should not have taken the liberty to guard them against this temptation to vanity and egotism. To vanity, because they go away not only with comfort, but exultation. To egotism, because they go away with an increased tendency to make self their subject.

A celebrated court* maxim-monger, who was deeply read in human nature, though he did not derive his knowledge from the best sources, nor always turn it to the best account, has however given a sound caution, from which communicative young persons might glean a lesson: Never talk of *yourself*, neither of your good, nor your bad qualities.'

It is true the Christian will know the above admonition to be carried too far. He who considers that the soul is liable to diseases as well as the body, will allow the necessity for a spiritual as well as bodily physician. Now if a patient must, in order to obtain relief, tell his case to a practitioner for the body, is it to be forbidden that the languishing and dejected soul should lean for advice on a moral counsellor, 'An interpreter, one of a thousand?' But if the graces of the person or manner, or the hope of attracting undue attention, added nothing to the skill or worth of the adviser in one case, let us take care they do not influence our choice of the confident in the other.

The writer has been induced to hint at the abuse of this practice, from actual instances, in which unsound confidence, and a piety too artificial, by exciting kindness and awakening sympathy, have led to ill-assorted connexions, formed on a misconception of the real state of mind of the confessing party.

These remarks are by no means intended to apply to that Christian communion at once so profitable and so delightful. When the intention is simple, the heart sincere, the motive pure, and the parties suitable, such intercourse cannot but be warmly recommended. The advantage is reciprocal. The doubting and distressed spirit receives the counsel and the consolation it seeks; while the pious counsellor gains a deeper knowledge of the human mind in its varieties, by the communication of the wants, the difficulties, and the sense of sin in the contrite heart. In other religious intercourse, where there is a nearer approach of character, the heart is warmed by the expansion, and improved by the interchange of pious sentiments. The prophet even annexes to it a reward: 'They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.'

Unprofitable Reading.

We have already ventured to allude to the disproportionate quantity of human life which is squandered in the ever multiplying haunts of public dissipation: but as this is an evil too notorious to require any fresh animadversion, we shall not stop to insist on the excess to which it is carried, but shall advert to another, which, if less ostensible, is scarcely less mischievous—we allude to the increased and increasing prevalence of idle reading.

For whether a large proportion of our probationary being—time that precious talent assigned us for providing for the treasures of eternity, be consumed in unprofitable reading at home, or in frivolous diversions abroad, the effect on the state of the mind is not very dissimilar.

* Le Duc de la Rochefoucault.

The difference between private excess and public intoxication, is not very material as to its effects on the individual; the chief difference lies in the example and the expenses; for the mind is nearly as much unfitted for sober duties by the one, as by the other.

It is the same principle which influences the inveterate novel reader, and the never wearied pursuer of public dissipation: only its operation is different in different tempers. The active and lively trifler seeks to lose reflection in the bustling crowd; while the more indolent alienates her mind from what is right, without any exertion of the body. In one it is the imagination which is acted upon; in the other, the senses. In one sense, indeed, the domestic idleness is the worst; because it wraps itself up in its own comparative merit, and complacently reposes on its superior sobriety; for, if the spirits are more agitated in the one case, in the other they sink into a more perilous indolence. The scenes acted over by the imagination in private, have also a superiority in mischief over those of actual, busy gayety in others, as being more likely to be retained and repeated. Instances, however, are not rare, in which a thorough manager contrives to make both meet. In this union the injury is doubled.

But it will be urged by the too ready advocates, that *all* these books are not wicked. It is readily granted. Many works of fiction may be read with safety, some even with profit; but the constant familiarity even with such as are not exceptionable in themselves, relaxes the mind that wants hardening, dissolves the heart which wants fortifying, stirs the imagination which wants quieting, irritates the passions which want calming, and, above all, disinclines and disqualifies for active virtues, and for spiritual exercises. The habitual indulgence in such reading is a silent, mining mischief. Though there is no act, and no moment, in which any open assault on the mind, is made, as in the instances previously noticed, yet the constant habit performs the work of a mental atrophy; it produces all the symptoms of decay, and the danger is not less for being more gradual, and, therefore, less suspected.

The general manners are becoming more and more relaxed. Even the old restraints, which had a regard to appearances, were not without their use. The writer remembers to have heard Dr. Johnson reprove a young lady in severe terms, for quoting a sentiment from Tom Jones —a book, he said, which, if a modest lady had done so improper a thing as to read, she should not do so immodest a thing as to avow.

Many instances might be adduced to prove, that the age is gradually grown less scrupulous. We will give only one. Another young lady, independent and rich, about the same time was tempted to send for Rousseau's Heloise. A very little progress in the work convinced her, that it was neither safe for her to read, nor, having read it, could she either modestly confess it, or conscientiously deny the perusal, if questioned. Her virtue conquered her curiosity; she sent away, unread, a book which may now be seen lying open on the tables of many who would be shocked at the slightest imputation on the delicacy of their minds, or the scrupulousness of their morals.

But to limit the evil of idle reading to the single article of *time*: It is, perhaps, not too much to assert, that if the hours spent by the higher and middle classes in this profitless perusal could be counted, they would, probably, far exceed in number those spent by the gay in more ostensible and public dissipation. Nay; we are almost tempted to say, that if, to the account of time dissipated by the latter, were added the hours spent by both classes in acts of devotion and serious reading, perhaps the total aggregate would be exceeded in number by the hours thrown away in the retirement of idle readers.

We are the more earnest on this subject, from being in possession of some facts which evince beyond any persuasions, which confirm beyond any arguments, the perils which we may be thought too warm in deprecating. Among the overflowing number of fictitious writings, not a few are there in the English, and still more and worse in the French and German schools, in which the intrigue between the already married hero and heroine is opened by means so apparently innocent, and conducted so gradually, and with so much plausibility, as, for a time, to escape detection. Vicious scenes are artfully kept out of sight, while virtuous principles are silently, but systematically undermined, till the imagination, that notorious corrupter of the heart, has had time to prepare the work of destruction. Such fascinating qualities are lavished on the seducer, and such attractive graces on the seduced, that the images indulged with delight by the fancy, carry on the reader imperceptibly to a point which is not so far from their indulgence in the act as some imagine. Such soothing apologies for an amiable weakness, that is, in plain English, for the breach of the seventh Commandment, are made by the writer, that the reader begins to think her judgment is convinced, as well as her inclination gratified; and the polluted mind, brought into the state, of all others, the least willing, and the least able, to resist practical crime, is ready to exclaim, with the satyrist of political vices,

> That *not* to be corrupt is the shame.

Thus the violation of as awful a prohibition as any in the decalogue, is softened down into a pardonable weakness. The stabbing the peace and honour of the husband, and the barbarous desertion of the innocent babes, or the still deeper wound given to the grown up daughters, is reduced to a venial fault, for which the irresistibleness of the temptation is shamelessly, but too successfully pleaded.

In tracing the effect, almost exclusively, of the unrestrained indulgence in these soothing pictures of varnished corruption, we could, were it prudent, produce actual instances of this breach of solemn vows, this total abandonment of all the proprieties, and all the duties of life; and it is too probable, that, besides the known instances to which allusion is here made, others might be adduced as having imbibed from the same sources the rudiments of moral misery, which has alarmingly swelled the recent list of

divorces, and thus render it more than probable, that the circulating library is no unfrequent road to Doctor's Commons.

There are distinctions and gradations maintained by the squanderers of time in their several ways, of which the well employed do not perceive the difference. Many who would turn with contempt from the card-table, think little of giving days and nights to these pernicious, or, at best, unimproving fictions—an exchange without being an improvement; for the volumes do not, like the cards, confine the mischief to the time they are in the hands, but, as we have observed, often leave impressions behind them when the others are forgotten.

How gladly should we limit these observations to persons whose time is turned to little account, and spent with little scruple, in *any* amusement which is not obviously corrupt! But it is with real reluctance we take the liberty to animadvert on the same error, though not carried to the same excess, in persons of a higher strain of character, persons of correct manners and considerable attainments. Do not many such tolerate in their families abundance of reading which, to say the least, is not improving, and of which, frequently, this would be too gentle a censure? Even where the books contain little that is coarse or corrupt, still it must be repeated, the prodigious quantity of life they consume must exceedingly deduct from that which would otherwise be allotted to more wholesome studies.

And this is not all.—We hear passages, not the most pure in point of delicacy, and quite unequivocal in point of impiety, repeated with enthusiasm by young ladies, from the works of a noble, but profligate and infidel poet: a poet rich in abused genius, and abounding in talents, ungratefully employed to dishonour Him who gave them.—But from the same fair lips, we hear little of Milton and of Spencer, of Cowper and of Young, of Thomson and of Goldsmith, of Gray and of Beattie, names once dear to every lover of enchanting song. Nor need we look back exclusively to departed genius, for the innocent and refreshing delights of poetry.—The muses have living votaries, who pour forth strains at once original, mellifluous, and chaste.

What shall we presume to say to sober-minded parents, even to grave clergymen, who not only do not prohibit the authors of the school in question; who not only do not restrain their daughters from being students in it, but who not unfrequently introduce, as part of the family reading, poetry, which if it contain not the gross expressions, and vulgar wickedness of the wits of Charles's days, is little less profane in principle, or corrupt in sentiment? There is some knowledge which it is a praise not to know; and the vice in this case being somewhat 'refined through certain strainers,' furnishes at once a temptation and an apology.

It may be urged, in vindication of this remissness, that as soon as young persons get out of their parents' hands, they will naturally choose their books for themselves. This is granted.—But is not every year which prolongs their precious innocence, a year gained? May not, within that period, the nascent libertinism be checked, the ardent imagination fixed to other pursuits, the sentiment of virtue kindled, the taste for purity confirmed, and the habit and love of prayer established? And, above all, is it not a pity that they should be able hereafter to plead as an apology for their intimacy with such books, that they were introduced to them by a fond and careful parent?

May we not take the liberty to ask of worthy, but, in this instance, injudicious parents, is this practice quite consistent with the command given to fathers, even under a darker dispensation that they should not limit the improvement of their children to any set hours, but that they should 'teach them diligently, sitting in the house, and walking by the way, rising up, and lying down?'

The Borderers.

Religion, and the world, used formerly to be considered as two different regions, situated separate and apart from each other.—They seldom maintained much unnecessary intercourse. One party shuddered at the strictness and severity of the other; which, in its turn, kept aloof from a communication which it feared might contaminate its own purity.

Between them lay a kind of neutral ground, which, though it divided them, was however, occasionally passed during any short interval of peace, for offices of necessity, of business, or of kindness; offices which, nevertheless, produced at no time entire reconciliation.

This neutral territory has been lately seized upon and occupied by a third party, a civil, obliging, and accommodating people, who are so perfectly well-bred, as to be desirous of keeping well with their neighbours on both sides the boundary. They are invited to intimacy by the gratifications held out by the one, and the reputation conferred by the other; present indulgence tempts on the left, future hope on the right. The present good, however, is generally too powerful a competitor for the future. They not only struggle to maintain their own interest in both countries, but are kindly desirous of accommodating all differences between the belligerent powers. Their situation, as borderers, gives them great local advantages on both sides. Though they keep on the same good terms with both, they have the useful and engaging talent, of seeming to belong exclusively to that party in which they happen to find themselves.

Their chief difficulty arises when they happen to meet the inhabitants of both territories together; yet so ingenious are they in the art of trimming, that they contrive not to lose much ground with either.

When alone with one party, they take care never to speak warmly of the absent. With the worldly they smile, and perhaps good-naturedly shake their head at some little scruples, and some excess of strictness in the absent party, though they do not go the length of actual censure.

When with the religious colony, they tenderly lament the necessity imposed on them of being

obliged to associate so much with neighbours from whom, they confess, there is not much to be learned, while they own there is something to be feared; but, as they *are quite sure* their inclination is not of the party, they trust there is no great danger.—They regret, that as they *must* live on terms with the world, they cannot, without a singularity to which ridicule would attach, avoid adopting some of their manners and customs. Thus they think it prudent to indulge in the same habits of luxury and expense; to conform to many of the same practices, doubtful at the best; and to attend on some places of diversion, for which, indeed, they profess to feel no great relish, and which, for the sake of propriety, are rather submitted to than enjoyed! 'One would not be particular, one does no good by singularity.'

By an invariable discretion, they thus gain the confidence and regard of both parties. The old settlers on the fashionable side are afraid of losing them, by opposition to their occasionally joining their enemies; while the religious colonies are desirous of retaining them, and rendering them service by courtesy and kindness, still charitably hoping their intentions are right, and their compliances reluctant. Thus their borders are every day extending, and their population increasing. As they can speak, as occasion requires, the language of both countries, they have the advantage of appearing to be always at home with each, who never suspect that the same facility in the dialect of the other, equally secures their popularity there.

In one respect, they carefully comply with the Apostle's injunction, applying to it, however, a meaning of their own, 'They let their moderation be known unto all men.'—They scrupulously avoid extremes. They keep a kind of debtor and creditor account with religion and the world, punctually paying themselves for some practice they renounce, by adopting some other which is a shade or two lighter: between these shades they discriminate nicely; and the pride they feel in what they have given up, is more sincere than the gratification at what they retain.

Thus, though hovering on the borders of both countries, they do not penetrate into the depths of either. The latitude they happen to be cast in varies according to circumstances. An awakening sermon will drive them, for a time, beyond the usual geographical degree; an amusing novel, or a new Canto of Childe Harold, will seduce them to retreat. Their intentions however, they flatter themselves, are generally on the right side, while their movements are too frequently on the other.

But though their language can accommodate itself to both parties, their personal appearance is entirely under the direction of one of them. In their external decorations, they are not behind the foremost of their fashionable friends; and truth obliges us reluctantly to confess, that their dress is as little confined within the bounds of strict delicacy, as that of women the rest of whose conduct is more exceptionable. The consequence is not unnatural; for to those who must *do* like other people, it is also necessary to *look* like other people. It does, however, seem a little incongruous to hear the language of one of the countries spoken, even with a strong accent, by ladies in the full costume of the other.

These borderers are frequently disposed to be benevolent, partly from a warm temperament, partly from a conviction that charity is a duty. They profess to give whatever they can spare, but of that proportion they allow vanity, and not piety, to be the arbiter. If personal ornament, if habits of luxury, did not swallow up their money, charity would have it. Charity is the next best thing to self-gratification.

Should they continue their present course, and their numbers increase, or, as is commonly the case, should continual motion accelerate progress, the land-marks of separation between the several countries will insensibly be lost, and it will be difficult to divine the exact limitations of the invading neighbours.

It has frequently been regretted that an amicable accommodation between the adverse parties could not be accomplished by the interference of this intermediate region. But whenever it has been attempted, it has not always been successful. The coalition, it has been found, could not readily be brought about. Prejudices on the one part, and rigorous demands on the other, have hitherto perpetuated the separation.

Terms of peace, indeed, cannot easily be made where one side expects so many sacrifices, and where the other has so much that must be parted with. The worldly territory having, beyond all comparison, the larger population, is of course the stronger, and therefore most likely to hold out.

But though no actual flag of truce has yet been sent out for a general peace, yet alliances are frequently contracted between individuals of the hostile countries, but on very unequal terms; for it unfortunately happens that the party from the more correct side, 'who come out to visit the daughters of the land,' have been seduced by the cheerful music, splendid banners, and gay attractions of the other; and have been prevailed upon to settle in the enemy's camp. To them it more frequently happens that they gradually forget all they learnt in their father's house, and insensibly adopt the manners of the strange country, than that they bring over the other party to their side. It may, therefore, perhaps be safer not to contract these *unholy alliances* till there is a conquest obtained by the small territory over the great one; an event which, if we may judge by the present state of the parties, seems at a very considerable distance.

But enough, and perhaps the scrupulous Christian will say too much, of this light manner of treating a serious subject. We acknowledge the charge; we bow to the correction: confessing that we scarcely knew how to approach this important and interesting class of persons, without the thin veil of something between fiction and fact, between allegory and true history. We felt an almost sinful reluctance to say any thing which might seem revolting to those pleasing characters who have shown some disposition to religion, who love its disciples, without having courage to imitate

them.—But real concern for their best interests will not allow those who assume to advocate the cause of Christianity, to conceal the distance at which they at present appear to stand from its constraining power, and from its practical consequences.

Perhaps your creed is not very erroneous. Probably the rectitude of your religious friends, whose doctrines are sound, and the indifference of your fashionable friends, who 'care for none of these things,' have preserved you pretty clear from errors of opinion. Whilst the occasional society of the pious has kept your sentiments in order, the amusements of the worldly have indemnified you for the severities of the other quarter. But opinions do little till they are ripened into principles. It is reputable to say with one party, 'strait is the gait and narrow is the way;' but the company of the other lets you see that it is not so easy to enter in at that gate, and to walk in that way, as you had flattered yourself you should have found it.

To you the *world* is by far the most formidable foe of the triple alliance, of the three confederated enemies, which the Scripture tells us war against the soul. We have presumed that opinions may not be very erroneous, but there are moral as well as speculative heresies, of which worldliness is the originating principle, and in which it is the practical operator. The WORLD is the grand heresiarch. There are many more who 'love the world, and the things of the world,' than who care whether doctrines are true or false. While they themselves are let alone to follow their own devices; while they are left undisturbed to their own pursuits; you may propound, or controvert, or adopt any opinion, sound or heretical, with equally little danger, or equally little benefit to them.

To the devotee of pleasure there is something harsh and repulsive in doctrines and dogmas; to take part with them would be going out of the way: while to those who can contrive to make right opinions live on friendly terms with wrong practices, it would be a gratuitous folly to add to the faults of conduct the errors of speculation.

In this affectionate remonstrance, we allude not to what might be called palpable and tangible offences; these the decorums of their condition set them above any temptation to commit. We speak not of any disbelief or contempt of religion; these are not the immediate perils of their position: it is not infidelity but indifference —a disinclination to Christianity, not as opposed to unbelief, but as it contradicts the maxims, the manners, the habits of their associates.—Their danger consists in a supreme attachment to present objects, and a neglect of such as are future; it consists in preferring the pleasures and the interests of the world to the service of Him who made it. They are governed by other principles than those of that gospel which has proclaimed that 'the friendship of the world is enmity against God.' They are influenced by its opinions, misled by its example, enslaved by its amusements; they fear lest any deviation from its prescribed code should bring their good sense and good taste in question; lest withdrawing from its practices should bring on them the imputation of narrowness or enthusiasm. 'In short, they go with 'the multitude that keep holiday,' not, indeed, in the Scriptural sense, but in direct conformity to the vulgar acceptation of that term.

Worldly allurements find in the unrenewed heart a willingness to meet them, a disposition accommodated to them by temperament, a readiness to pursue them, increased by habit. The natural heart is already on the world's side, Before the world has time to begin its attack. the citadel is disposed to yield. Before the assault is made, there is a mutual good understanding, a silent connivance between the besiegers and the besieged. As soon as the trenches are opened, the disposition to parley and to submit is nearly the same act.

You appeared, however, to take the first step in what is right, by occasionally joining religious society, and by the pleasure you expressed in it. By that introduction you seemed not undesirous of ranging yourself partly on that side. Having broken through that first obstruction, it was hoped that every subsequent step would have become less irksome.

That religion has its difficulties, we do not pretend to deny; but with a hearty concurrence of the will, nurtured by cordial prayer, strengthened by a full reliance on the Saviour, and sustained by the aid of His Spirit, which is offered you, the difficulties will daily diminish. Rest not, then, in that low state of religion which is satisfied with the hope of escaping punishment; calculate not how small a measure may suffice to effect that escape. Search not out for an imaginary intermediate state between the children of wrath and the children of God. Rest not till you have attained that entire consecration of heart, whose object, aim, and end, is eternal life. Forget not that they who run in a race, though they may come closer to the goal, yet, if they come short of it, fail of the prize as completely as those competitors whose distance is greater: and, if we come short of heaven, whether we lose it by more or fewer steps, the failure is equally decisive, the loss equally irreparable.

Those worldly persons with whom you associate are intrenched on every side by numbers; they therefore act as if they thought that the evil, supposing it to be evil, which is shared among so many, cannot be injurious to the individual; forgetting that every man must bear his own burden, and suffer for his own sin; for, though multitudes may give countenance to your errors here, they will not answer for you hereafter.

Do not follow those who have no settled course of their own—who are hurried to and fro by every breath of custom—whom fashion leadeth withersoever it listeth. The persons against whom we would guard you, though confident, are not without their fears; but it is worth observing, that their fears seldom lie on the same side with their dangers. They fear not great practical errors; these they soften down and treat with complacency; these are tenderly mentioned as the infirmities of nature—weaknesses to which we are all liable. Almost every excess in personal gratification is thus kindly palliated: 'Why did God give us both the dis-

position and the means to indulge it, if indulgence were a sin?' There is but one excess they guard against—an excess, indeed, of which they are in little danger,—we mean a high degree of religion; for surely excess is little to be feared, where the thing has not yet even been entered upon!

Be assured, that whatever serves to keep the heart from God, is one and the same spirit of irreligion, whether it appear in the shape of coarse vice, or whether it is softened by the smoothness of decorum, and the blandishments of polished life. We are far from comparing them together, as if they were equally injurious to society, or equally offensive to decency; but we *must* compare them together as equally drawing away the heart from the worship and the love of God. Courteousness, which is unaccompanied by principle, will stand the most courteous in no stead, with Him who is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Some of these well-bred persons, who exercise this large and liberal candour towards practical offences, and treat with tenderness certain vices, not thought disreputable by the world, and who even put a favourable construction on things very unjustifiable in the sight of God, lose all their kindness, put no favourable interpretation, when sound religion is in question. They are, indeed, too discreet to reprobate it under its own proper name, but the ready appellation of enthusiasm presents itself—is always at hand to vindicate the hastiest judgment, and the most contemptuous construction.

But though we think far better things of you, whom we are addressing, yet may you not, in this society, be tempted to disavow, or, at least, to conceal, even the measure of piety you actually have, for fear of exciting that dreaded suspicion, of 'being righteous over much?' May not this fear, strengthened by this society, keep you back till your pious tendencies, by being suppressed, may gradually come to be extinguished?

We are ready to acknowledge, and to love, all that is amiable in you: but we must not forget, that the fairest and most brilliant creature, the most engaging manners, and the most accomplished mind, stands in the same need of repentance, forsaking of sin, redemption by the Son of God, and renovation by His Spirit, as the least attractive. The more engaging the manners, and the more interesting the acquirements, the more is it to be lamented, that those very attractions, by your complacency in them, may have stood between you and heaven,—may, by your resting in them, have been the cause of your not pressing towards the mark for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Bear then in mind, that you may be pleasing to others, while you have an unsanctified heart; that politeness, though it may put on the appearance of humility, is but a poor imitation of that prime grace; that good breeding, though the beautiful decoration of a pious mind, is but a wretched substitute for the want of it.

Be assured, however, at the same time, that true religion will in no wise diminish your natural or acquired graces; so far from it, those graces will be more estimable; they will be even more admired, when they are known no to be the best things you have. When you set less value on them yourself, they will be more pleasing to others; who, though they will not estimate them above their worth, will not depreciate them below it.

We are persuaded that you are too reasonable to expect that Christianity will change its character, or lower its requirements, or make the strait gate wider, or the narrow way broader, or hold out false colours, in order to induce you to embrace it. It is not that easy and superficial thing which some suppose, as requiring little more than a ceremonious attendance on its forms, and a freedom from the gross violation of its commands. This may be nominal, but it is not saving Christianity. It is not that spiritual, yet practical religion, for which the Son of God endured the cross, that He might establish it in the hearts of His followers,—which He is pleading with His Heavenly Father, to establish in your heart. He did not suffer that His children might be excused from self-denial; nor that, because He was holy, they might be negligent. He suffered, that 'the women that are at ease might rise up; that the careless daughters might hear His voice, and give ear unto His word.'

If you are disposed to think that what you must give up is great, compare it with what you will gain, and you will be ashamed of your miscalculation; you will think the sacrifice as small as the objects sacrificed were worthless; for Christianity, though a self-denying principle, yet denies you nothing which, even now, adds to your real happiness. It only disenchants you from an illusion, and gives you substantial peace in exchange. It will rob you of nothing which good sense and sound reason do not condemn, as well as the New Testament.

Perhaps you have just religion enough to render you occasionally uneasy. The struggle between the claims of the world and your casual convictions, is far from being a happy state. The flattery which delights, misleads; the diversions which amuse, will not console: the prospect which promises, disappoints. Continue not, then, 'working in the fire for very vanity.' Labour not to reconcile two interests, which, spite of your endeavours, will ever remain irreconcileable.

A life governed by Christianity differs in every thing from the worldly system. It is free from the turbulence and the agitation of its pursuits: it has none of the anxieties and jealousies of its competitions; consequently none of the lassitude and the vexation of its disappointing results. The further you proceed in its paths of pleasantness, the pleasanter they become. Its difficulties diminish, its delights increase. It has pleasures of its own, higher and better; satisfactions which depend not on human admiration, but on His favour, whom to know is eternal life.

Continue not, then, to live as if the great end for which you were sent into the world, was already accomplished. Continue not to act as if you thought you had done all for which God gave you an intelligent mind, reasoning faculties, aspiring thoughts, capacities for endless

happiness. Let not those powers which were meant to fit you not only for the society of angels, but for the vision of God, be any longer wasted on objects the most frivolous; on things which, at best, must end when this world ends. Oh! renounce pursuits, some of them below a rational, unsuited to an accountable, and altogether unworthy of a never-ending being! Renounce them for objects more becoming a candidate for an inheritance among the saints in light, better adapted to an immaterial, immortal spirit, and commensurate with eternity.

REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER,

AND ON THE ERRORS WHICH MAY PREVENT ITS EFFICACY.

On the Corruption of Human Nature.

The most original French writer of our own time, but who employed his powerful talents to the most pernicious purposes, abruptly begins his once popular work on education with this undeniable truth,—'All is good as it comes out of the hands of God, all is corrupted in the hands of man.'

In his first position, this sceptic bears a just testimony to the goodness of his Creator; but the second clause, his subsequent application of it, though also a truth, is not the whole truth. He ascribes all the evils of man to the errors of his education.

Now, though it cannot be denied that many of his faults are owing to a defect in education, yet his prime evil lies deeper, is radical, and must be traced to a more remote and definite cause.

Had the writer been as enlightened as he was ingenious, he would have seen that the principle of evil was antecedent to his education; that it is to be found in the inborn corruption of the human heart. If then, from an infidel, we are willing to borrow an avowal of the goodness of God in the creation of man, we must look to higher authorities to account for his degeneracy, even to the sacred oracles of God himself.

The subject of man's apostacy is so nearly connected with the subject of Prayer, being indeed that which constitutes the necessity of this duty, that some mention of the one ought to precede any discussion of the other. Let, then, the conviction, that we are fallen from our original state, and that this lapse furnishes the most powerful incentive to prayer, furnish an apology for making a few preliminary remarks on this doctrine.

The doctrine is not the less a fundamental doctrine, because it has been abused to the worst purposes: some having considered it as leaving us without hope, and others, as lending an excuse to unresisted sin. It is a doctrine which meets us in one unbroken series throughout the whole sacred volume; we find it from the third of Genesis, which records the event of man's apostacy, carried on through the history of its fatal consequences in all the subsequent instances of sin, individual and national, and running in one continued stream from the first sad tale of woe, to the close of the sacred canon in the Apocalyptic Vision.

And, to remove the groundless hope, that this quality of inherent corruption belonged only to the profligate and abandoned, the Divine Inspirer of the sacred writers took especial care, that they should not confine themselves to relate the sins of these alone.

Why are the errors, the weaknesses, and even the crimes of the best men recorded with equal fidelity? Why are we told of the twice repeated deceit of the father of the faithful? Why of the single instance of vanity in Hezekiah? Why of the too impetuous zeal of Elijah? Why of the error of the almost perfect Moses? Why of the insincerity of Jacob? Why of the far darker crimes of the otherwise holy David? Why of the departure of the wisest of men from that piety, displayed with sublimity unparalleled in the dedication of the Temple? Why seems it to have been invariably studied to record with more minute detail the vices and errors of these eminent men, than even those of the successive impious kings of Israel and of Judah; while these last are generally dismissed with the brief, but melancholy sentence, that they did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; followed only by too frequent an intimation, that they made way for a successor worse than themselves? The answer is, that the truth of our universal lapse could only be proved by transmitting the record of those vices, from which even the holiest men were not exempt.

And as these affecting details unanswerably establish the truth of the doctrine, so they are not recorded for barren doctrinal information. They are recorded to furnish Christians of every age with a salutary caution, with awful warning.

Surely the best man among us will hardly venture to say, that he is more holy than Abraham, Moses, David, or Peter. If, then, these saints exhibited such evidences of not having escaped the universal infection, will not every reflecting child of mortality yield to the conviction, that this doctrine is as true as the history which has recorded it? Will he not proceed further to say, 'How then shall I be high-minded! How shall I not fear? How shall I deny the cause of the evil tendencies of my own heart, the sins of my own life, the thoughts of foolishness, and the actings of iniquity within myself?' And will not such serious enquiry, by God's grace, acting on the study of the characters of these highly eminent, but not perfect worthies of old times, patriarchs, prophets, and saints, lead the enquirer, through the redemption, wrought for all, and faith in the operation of the blessed Spirit, to that effectual repentance and fervent

prayer, to which, in this same Divine history, such gracious promises are made?

Had the Holy Scriptures kept back from man the faithful delineations of the illustrious characters to which we have referred, the truth of the doctrine in question, though occasionally felt, and in spite of his resistance forced upon him, would not have been believed; or, if believed, would not have been acknowledged.

It is, then, one great end of the oracles of Divine truth, to humble man, under a sense of his inherent and actual corruptions. The natural man feels it repugnant to his pride to suppose this doctrine is addressed to him.

It is very true that this all-important doctrine of human corruption, is, like many other truths, both in the natural, moral, and spiritual world, liable to certain speculative objections, and metaphysical difficulties.—Laying hold on these, which, often, a child might discover, and no philosopher be able to answer, even upon merely philosophical subjects, we excuse ourselves altogether from studying the Divine book, and fearful, in secret, of the discoveries we should make, pretend that its Author has left truth so obscure, as to be impervious to human eyes; or so lofty, as to be above human reach.

But is it not making God unjust, and even the author of that sin which he charges on ourselves, to suppose that he had put truth and knowledge out of our reach, and then threatened to punish us for failing in that which he himself had made impossible? Is it probable that He, whose eyes you say are so pure, that he cannot look upon iniquity, should tolerate it, by tying our hands, and blinding our eyes, and thus abandon us to the unrestrained dominion of that which he hates?

The only real question which concerns us in our present imperfect and probationary state, is this:—Are the statements of revelation sufficient to establish this or that doctrine? And is the doctrine so established, a sufficient ground for the duties required? If this be answered in the affirmative, then to ask for fewer difficulties, clearer light, or stronger motives to action, is only to enter a vain contest with Almighty wisdom, and Divine supremacy. Our present disobedience proves that more light would only increase our guilt, stronger motives would only render us more inexcusable. We should reject then what we neglect now.—To refuse what we now have, is not for want of light, but of eyes; not for want of motives, but of faith; not for want of rules, but of obedience; not for want of knowledge, but of will. Let us then pity those blind eyes which do not see, and especially those wilful eyes which will not see.

The Christian revelation, as far as respects its professed practical purpose, is brought within the reach of the plainest understanding. We speak of the Gospel itself, and not of those metaphysical perplexities with which the schools have endeavoured to meet metaphysical objections; we speak of the fundamental truths on which God has made salvation to depend. The unlettered Christian lays hold on those truths which the philosopher misses. The former looks to the Holy Spirit for his teacher, the latter to his own understanding. The one lives holily, and thus 'by doing the will of God, he comes to know of the doctrine whether it be of God.'

Christianity hangs on a few plain truths; 'that God is, and that he is the rewarder of all that seek him;' that man has apostatised from his original character, and by it has forfeited his original destination; that Christ came into this world and died upon the cross to expiate sin, and to save sinners; that after his ascension into Heaven, he did not leave his work imperfect. He sent his Holy Spirit, who performed his first office by giving to the Apostles miraculous powers. His offices did not cease there; he has indeed withdrawn his miraculous gifts, but he still continues his silent but powerful operations, and that in their due order,—first, that of convincing of sin, and of changing the heart of the sinner, before he assumes the gracious character of the Comforter. What need, then, of heresies to perplex doctrines, or of philosophy to entangle, or of will-worshippers to multiply them?

We do not deny that there are, in Christianity, high and holy mysteries; but these 'secret things,' though they 'belong to God,' have their practical uses for us; they teach us humility, the prime Christian grace; and they exercise faith, the parent attribute of all other graces.

This religion of facts, then, the poorest listeners in the aisles of our churches understand sufficiently, to be made by it wise unto salvation. They are saved by a practical belief of a few simple, but inestimable truths.

By these same simple truths, martyrs and confessors, our persecuted saints, and our blessed reformers, were saved. By these few simple truths, Locke, and Boyle, and Newton, were saved; not because they saw their religion through the glass of their philosophy, but because theirs was not 'a philosophy, falsely so called;' nor their science, 'a science of opposition;' but a science and a philosophy which were made subservient to Christianity, and because their deep humility sanctified their astonishing powers of mind. These wonderful men, at whose feet the learned world is still satisfied to sit, sat themselves at the feet of Jesus. Had there been any other way but the cross by which sinners could be saved, they perhaps, of all men, were best qualified to have found it.

The wise and the weak, the illiterate and the learned, cannot, indeed, equally discuss or expound these doctrines, but they are equally saved by them. In view of the simple means of salvation, talents lose their superiority, learning its dignity, and power its pre-eminence. While the sober Christian keeps on his safe, because prescribed course; the wise, and the disputer of this world, by deserting it fall into absurdities which plain men escape; they make the difficulties they do not find, and wander in the endless mazes of presumptuous deviation.

To return, then, to the particular doctrines under consideration:—Let us believe man is corrupt, because the Bible tells us he is so. Let us believe that such were so by nature, even the best, since we learn it from the Divine source. Let us from the same authority, trace the disorder to its source from a fallen parent, its seat in a corrupted heart, its extent through the whole man, its universality over the whole race.

All are willing to allow that we are subject to frailties, to imperfections, to infirmities; facts compel us to confess a propensity to crimes, but worldly men confine the commission of them to the vulgar. But to rest here would lead us to a very false estimate of the doctrine in question, contrary to the decisive language of Scripture; it would establish corruption to be an accident, and not a root. It would, by a division of offenders into two classes, deny that all offences are derived from one common principle.

Among the higher ranks there is little temptation to the commission of certain sins; murder is rare, fraud uncommon, robbery not found, yet the inborn principle is the same in all. Circumstances, rank, education, example, reputation, give advantages to one class, which, had they changed places, might have led to the vices so common in the other; while, had the notorious offenders against the laws and the Divine law-giver, changed situations with their superiors, we should then have heard only of *their* imperfections, *their* infirmities, their *frailties*.

Temptation does not make the sin, it lies ready in the heart. Accident does not create the propensity, it only brings it into action. It destroys the plea of exemption from natural corruption, but it does not put that corruption *into* the heart. It was there before, ready, without the grace of God, ready, without the restraint of religion, ready, without the bridle of an enlightened conscience, to break out into any excess. Yet there are many flagrant offences against God and against human laws, which the high-born, and the high-bred frequently commit with as little scruple as the lowest. The frequency of duelling, the breach of the seventh commandment, two offences frequently found in the same company, gaming, the violation of the Sabbath, with other enormities, would alone sufficiently prove the principle to exist, independently of rank, education, or fortune. Are not what, by way of distinction, we may call the metaphysical or spiritual sins, which are cherished without loss of character—is not ambition, which knows no bounds—envy, which knows no rest—avarice which destroys all feeling—jealousy, which is its own tormentor—ill-temper, which is the tormentor of others—ungoverned anger, which is murder in its first seeds; are not all these equally to be found in the high-born and the low-bred? Again, is not sensuality in the great, which, in the case of the poor, might have produced unfair means to indulge it—is not the love of splendour and ostentation, which are thought to add dignity to the rich, the very principle which leads the necessitous to forgery, the crime for which so many are now suffering capital punishment?

If then men would examine their own bosoms as closely, as they censure the faults of others loudly, we should all find there the incipient stirrings of many a sin, which, when brought into action, by the temptations of poverty, of ignorance, of unresisted passion, produce consequences the most appalling. Let us then bless God, not that we are better than other men, but that we are placed by Providence out of the reach of being goaded by that temptation, stimulated by that poverty, which, had they been lot, might have led to the same terminatio

Let then the fear of God, the knowled his word, and the knowledge of ourselves, us that there is not, by nature, so wide a ence between ourselves and the men we as we fondly fancy; that there is not, by n a great gulf fixed, that they who are on side might not have passed over to the Let us not look to any superior virtue, t native strength of our own, but let us look a lively gratitude to that mercy of God has preserved us from such temptations; unmerited goodness, which has placed circumstances that have put us above nec —'the devil's plea.' But, above all, let us to that preventing and restraining grace is withheld from none who ask it, and we not be so very forward to say, contemptu to the worst of our fellow-creatures, 'stan I am holier than thou.' A thorough beli this doctrine would lead us to pray more vently to be delivered in 'all time of our w as in all time of our tribulation.'

It is not enough that God has *revealed* way of salvation, he must also incline us *cept* it. It is this gift, and this accept which makes the distinction between the men and the worst. Without this all-pow grace, Latimer might have led Bonner t stake; with it, Bonner might have ascende scaffold a martyr to true religion. Without grace, Luther might have fattened on the of indulgences; and with it, Leo the T might have accomplished the blessed wor the reformation.

—

False Notions of the Dignity of Man, shown his Helplessness and Dependance.

MAN is not only a sinful, he is also a hel and therefore a dependant being. This new and powerful motives for the necessit prayer, the necessity of looking continually higher power, to a better strength than our If that Power sustain us not, we fall; if H rect us not, we wander. His guidance is only perfect freedom, but perfect safety. greatest danger begins from the momen imagine we are able to go alone.

The self-sufficiency of a man, arising his imaginary dignity, is a favourite doc with the nominal Christian. He feeds his with this pernicious aliment. The cont opinion is so closely connected, indeed is s timately blended, with the subject of the ceding chapter, that we shall have the less sion to extend our present observations to length.

We hear much, and we hear falsely, of dignity of human nature. Prayer, founde the true principles of Scripture, alone tea us wherein our true dignity consists. The nity of a fallen creature is a perfect anon True dignity, contrary to the common opi that it is an inherent excellence, is actual sense of the want of it; it consists not in valuing ourselves, but in a continual feelin

our dependence upon God, and an unceasing aim at conformity to his image.

Nothing but a humbling sense of the sinfulness of our nature, of our practised offences, of our utter helplessness, and constant dependence, can bring us to fervent and persevering prayer. How did the faith of the saints of old flourish under a darker dispensation, through all the clouds and ignorance which obscured their views of God. 'They looked unto Him and were enlightened! How do their slender means and high attainments reproach us!

David found that the strength and spirit of nature which had enabled him to resist the lion and the bear, did not enable him to resist his outward temptations, nor to conquer his inward corruptions. He therefore prayed, not only for deliverance 'from blood guiltiness,' for a grievously remembered sin, he prayed for the *principle* of piety, for the *fountain* of holiness, for 'the creation of a clean heart,' for 'the renewing of a right spirit,' for 'truth in the inward parts,' that the 'comfort of God's help might be granted him.' This uniform avowal of the secret workings of sin, this uniform dependence on the mercy of God to pardon, and the grace of God to assist, render his precatory addresses, though they are those of a sovereign and a warrior, so universally applied to the case of every private Christian.

One of our best poets—himself an unsuccessful courtier—from a personal experience of the mortifying feelings of abject solicitation, has said, that if there were the man in the world whom he was at liberty to hate, he would wish him no greater punishment than attendance and dependence. But he applies the heavy penalty of this wish to the dependants on mortal greatness.

Now, attendance and dependence are the very essence both of the safety and happiness of a Christian. Dependence on God is his only true liberty, as attendance on Him is his only true consolation. The suitor for human favour is liable to continual disappointment; if he knock at the door of his patron, there is probably a general order not to admit him. In the higher case, there is a special promise, that 'to him that knocks it shall be opened.' The human patron hates importunity; the Heavenly Patron invites it. The one receives his suitor according to his humour, or refuses his admission from the caprice of the moment; with the other, 'there is no variableness nor shadow of turning:' 'Come unto me,' is his uniform language.

The man in power has many claims on his favour, and comparatively few boons to bestow. The God of Power has all things in His gift, and only blames the solicitor for coming so seldom, or coming so late, or staying so little a while. He only wishes that his best gifts were more earnestly sought.

When we solicit an earthly benefactor, it is often upon the strength of some pretence to his favour—the hope of some reward for past services: even if we can produce little claim, we insinuate something like merit. But when we approach our heavenly Benefactor, so far from having any thing like claim, any thing like merit to produce, our only true, and our only acceptable plea, is our utter want of both claim and merit—is the utter destitution of all that can recommend us; yet we presume to ask favour, when we deserve nothing but rejection; we are encouraged to ask for eternal happiness, when we deserve only eternal punishment. Though we have nothing to produce but disloyalty, we ask for the privilege of subjects; though nothing but disobedience to offer, we plead the privileges of children—we implore the tenderness of a father.

In dependence on God there is nothing abject; in attendance on Him, nothing servile. He never, like the great ones of the world, receives the suitor with a petrifying frown, or, what is worse, never dismisses him with a cruel smile and a false promise.

Even if the petitioner to human power escape the vexation of being absolutely rejected; even if his suit be granted, the grant it may be, is accompanied with a mortifying coldness, with an intelligible hint that the donor expects to be no further troubled. The grant may be attended with such a tedious delay as may make it no benefit. The boon granted does not, perhaps, prove so valuable as the applicant expected; or he finds he might have spent the long season of his attendance, his watching, and his waiting to better purpose; or he might have employed his interest in another quarter, in obtaining something more important; or, after all, he may have received it too late in life to turn it to the profitable account he had expected.

But the Almighty Donor never puts off His humble petitioner to a more convenient season. His Court of Requests is always open. He receives the petition as soon as it is offered; He grants it as soon as it is made; and, though he will not dispense with a continuance of the application, yet to every fresh application He promises fresh support. He will still be solicited, but it is in order that He may still bestow. Repeated gifts do not exhaust His bounty, nor lessen His power of fulfilment. Repeated solicitation, so far from wearying His patience, is an additional call for His favour.

Nor is the lateness of the petition any bar to its acceptance: He likes it should be early, but He rejects it not though it be late.

With a human benefactor the consciousness of having received former favours, is a motive with a modest petitioner for preventing his making an application for more; while, on the contrary, God even invites us to call on Him for future mercies, by the powerful plea of His past acts of goodness—'even mercies which have been ever of old.' And as past mercies on God's part, so, to the praise of His grace be it said, that past offences on our own part are no hindrance to the application of hearty repentance or the answer of fervent prayer.

The petitioner to human power, who may formerly have offe ded his benefactor, contrives to soften his displeasure, by representing that the offence was a small one. The devout petitioner to God uses no subterfuge. In the boldness of faith, and the humility of repentance, he cries 'Pardon my iniquity, for it is *great*.'

It is no pardon, then, to assert that dependence on God is the only true safety; depend-

ence upon Him, the only true freedom—freedom from doubt and fear, and sin; freedom from human dependence; above all, freedom from dependence on ourselves. As pardoned sinners, through the redemption wrought for them, find, in the renewed nature, a restoration to that dignity they had forfeited, so those who are most destitute of the dignity which arises from this dependence, missing the reality, deceive themselves with the shadow.

He who does not believe this fundamental truth, on which the other doctrines of the Bible are built,—even he who does nominally profess to assent to it as a doctrine of Scripture; yet, if he does not experimentally acknowledge it; if he does not feel it in the convictions of his own awakened conscience, in his discovery of the evil workings of his own heart, and the wrong propensities of his own nature, all bearing their testimony to its truth—such a one will not pray earnestly for its cure—will not pray with that feeling of his own helplessness, with that sense of dependence on Divine assistance, which alone makes prayer efficacious.

Of this corruption he can never attain an adequate conception, till his progress in religion has opened his eyes on what is the natural state of man. Till this was the case, he himself was as far from desiring the change, as he was from believing it necessary. He does not even sususpect its existence, till he is in some measure delivered from its dominion.

Nothing will make us truly humble, nothing will make us constantly vigilant, nothing will entirely lead us to have recourse to prayer so fervently or so frequently, as this ever abiding sense of our corrupt nature,—as our not being able to astribe any disposition in ourselves, to any thing that is good, or any power to avoid, by our own strength, any thing that is evil.

The obligation of Prayer universal—Regular seasons to be observed.—The sceptic and the sensualist reject prayer.

Among the many articles of erroneous calculation, to which so much of the sin and misery of life may be attributed, the neglect or misuse of prayer will not form the lightest. The prophet Jeremiah, in his impassioned address to the Almighty makes no distinction between those who acknowledge no God, and those who live without prayer. 'Pour our thy fury, O Lord, upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.'

Some duties are more incumbent on some persons, and some on others; depending on the difference of talents, wealth, leisure, learning, station, and opportunities; but the duty of prayer is of imperative obligation; it is universal, because it demands none of any of the above requisites; it demands only a willing heart, a consciousness of sin, a sense of dependence, a feeling of helplessness. Those who voluntarily neglect it, shut themselves out from the presence of their Maker. 'I know you not,' must assuredly be the sentence of exclusion on those who thus 'know not God.' Nothing, it is true, can exclude them from His inspection, but they exclude themselves from his favour.

Many nearly renounce prayer, by affecting to make it so indefinite a thing, as not to require regular exercise. Just as many, also, unhallow the Sabbath, who pretend they do nothing on week-days, which they should fear to do on Sundays. The truth is, instead of sanctifying the week-days by raising them to the duties of Sunday—which is, indeed, impracticable, let men talk as they please,—they desecrate the Sunday to secular purposes, and so contrive to keep no Sunday at all.

Stated seasons for indispensable employments, are absolutely necessary for so desultory, so versatile, a creature as man. That which is turned over to any chance time is seldom done at all; and those who despise the recurrence of appointed times and seasons, are only less censurable than those who rest in them.

Other duties and engagements have their allotted seasons; why, then, should the most important duty in which an immortal being can be employed, by being left to accident, become liable to occasional omision, liable to increasing neglect, liable to total oblivion?

All the other various works of God know their appointed times;—the seasons, the heavenly bodies, day and night, seed-time and harvest,—all set an example of undeviating regularity. Why should man, the only thinking, be the only disorderly, work of Almighty power!

But whilst we are asserting the necessity of seasons of prayer, let us not be suspected of attaching undue importance to them; for all these are but the frame work, the scaffolding, the mere mechanical and subsidiary adjuncts; they are but the preparation for Christian worship; they remind us, they intimate to us, that an important work is to be done, but are no part of the work itself.

They, therefore, who most insist on the value of stated devotions, must never lose sight of that grand, and universal prime truth, that wherever we are, still we are in God's presence; whatever we have is His gift; whatever we hope is his promise; feelings which are commensurate with all time, all places, and limited to no particular scenes or seasons.

There is in some, in many it is to be feared, a readiness to acknowledge this general doctrine, which miscalled natural religion teaches; but who are far from including in their system the peculiarities, the duties, the devotions of Christianity. These are decorous men of the world who, assuming the character of philosophical liberality, value themselves on having shaken off the shackles of prejudice, superstition, and system.—They acknowledge a Creator of the universe, but is in a vague and general way. They worship a Being, 'whose temple is all space;' that is, every where but in the human heart. They put Him as far as possible from themselves. Believing that He has no providential care of them, they feel no personal interest in Him. God and nature are with them synonymous terms. That the creation of the world was His work, they do not go the length of denying; but that its government is in His hands, is with them very problematical.

In any case, however, they are assured that a Being of such immensity requires not the little-

ness of superstitious forms, nor the petty limitation, of stated seasons, and regular devotions; that he is infinitely above attending to our paltry concerns, though he himself anticipated this objection, when he condescended to declare, 'He that offereth me thanks and praise, he honoureth me.'

One says *he* can adore the Author of nature in the contemplation of his works; that the mountains and the fields are *His* altar for worship. Another says, that his notion of religion is to deal honestly in his commerce with the world; both insist that they can serve God any where and every where.—We know they can, and we hope they do; but our Saviour, who knew the whole make of man, his levity, instability, and unfixedness, and who was yet no friend to the formalist or the superstitious, not only commands, at the hour of prayer, our entering into the closet; but our shutting the door, a tacit reproof perhaps of the indevotion of the Sadducean, as well as the publicity of the Pharisaic religion, but certainly, an admonition of general obligation.

This, indeed, is not the place to enter on that mass of concurring evidence which so irresistibly confirms the especial truth of Christianity. But is it not extraordinary that these men who overlook, or rather inquire not into, that accumulation of evidence in the exhibition of miracles, and the fulfilment of prophecy—that is, who do not read the Bible—should not at least attend to one species of evidence more immediately within their reach, and more intelligible to common observation; we mean the confirmation derived to the proofs of Scripture, from the history of the world, from their avowal of moral evil, their careful cultivation, where it suits them, of habits of an opposite nature, their practical and prudential maxims, where they have an end to pursue, an interest to gain. Do not similar rules, applied to Christian principles, and delivered in the Divine record, prove clearly that our Divine teacher 'knew what was in man?'

In treating of prayer, it would be a superfluous labour to address unbelievers with the same arguments or persuasions which we would humbly propose to such as ever, with whatever degree of conviction, their belief in Christianity. It would be folly to address them with motives drawn from a book which they do not believe, or do not read. With those who are ignorant of the first principles of religion, or those who reject them, we have no common ground on which to stand. St. Paul, with his usual discrimination, has left us an example in this as well as in all other cases. With the philosophical Athenians he confined his reasonings to natural religion. To the Jewish king, Agrippa, who 'believed the prophets,' in telling the story of his own conversion, he most judiciously introduced the great doctrines of remission of sins and justification by faith.

If the Pyrrhonist in question were to see a genuine Christian character delineated in all its dimensions, marked with its fair lineaments, and enlivened by its quickening spirit, such, for instance, as is exemplified in the character of St. Paul, he would consider it as a mere picture of the imagination; and would no more believe its reality than he does that of Xenophon's Prince, the Stoic's Wise Man, Quintilian's Perfect Orator, or any other Platonic or Utopian representation. Or could he be brought to believe its actual existence, he would set such a man far above the necessity of prayer; he would emancipate him from any such humbling practice; he would enthrone him on his own independent worth; for how should he ever suspect that such a man would ever pray at all, much less would be in prayer more abundant, in humiliation more profound, in self-renunciation more abased?

Is it not probable that some of those enquiring minds, who adorned the porch and the academy, as well as those more favoured men who saw the future, through the dim and distant perspective of prophecy, would have rejoiced to see the things which you see, and have not believed?

How gratefully would many of these illustrious spirits have accepted advantages which you overlook! How joyfully would they have received from Him who cannot lie, the assurance that if they would seek of *Him* that truth after which they 'were feeling,' they should find it! How gladly would that sublime and elegant spirit, whose favourite theme was pure spiritual love, have listened to the great apostle of love; to him who caught the flame as he leaned on the bosom of his affectionate master!

How would this same exalted genius, who taught the immortality of the soul to the bright, yet blind Athenians—he, whose penetrating mind rather guessed, than knew what he taught—whose keen eye caught some glimpses of a brighter state through the darkness which surrounded him—how would he have gloried in in that light and immortality which the gospel revelation has brought to light!—but with what unspeakable rapture would he have learned that He who revealed the life could give it: that He who promised immortality could bestow it! With what obedient transport would he have heard this touching apostrophe, at once a strong reproof and a tender invitation—'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life!—'Ye philosophising cavillers, who live in the meridian splendour of this broad day, 'how will you escape, if you neglect so great a salvation?'

But if pride, the dominant intellectual sin, keeps the sceptic aloof from the humiliating duties of devotion; the habitual indulgence of the senses, in another class, proves an equal cause of alienating the heart from prayer.

The man absorbed by ease and enjoyment, and sunk in the relaxing softness of a voluptuous life, has a natural distaste to every thing that stands in opposition to the delights of that life. It is the smoothness of his course which makes it so slippery. He is lost before he feels that he is sinking. For whether we plunge at once from a precipitous height, or slide down from it on an inclined plane, still, while there is a yawning gulf at the bottom, our destruction is equally inevitable.

The systematic but decorous sensualist is one whose life is a course of sober luxury, of measured indulgence. He contrives to reconcile an abandonment of sound principle with a kind of

orderly practice. He enquires rather what is decent than what is right, what will secure the favourable opinion of the world, especially his own class, rather than what will please God. His object is to make the most of this world. Selfishness has established its throne in his heart. His study is to make every thing and every person subservient to his own convenience, or pleasure, or profit, yet without glaringly trespassing on the laws of propriety or custom. Self is the source and centre of all his actions; but though this governing principle is always on the watch for its gratification, yet, as part of that gratification depends on a certain degree of reputation, it frequently leads him to do right things though without right motives; for the main-spring sometimes sets the right a-going as well as the wrong.

He goes to church on all public occasions, but without devotion; gives alms without charity; subscribes to public institutions without being interested in their prosperity, except as they are frequently succeeded by a pleasant dinner and good company, and as the subscription list of names he knows will be published. He lives on good terms with different, and even opposite classes, of men, without being attached to any; he does them favours without affection, knowing that he shall have occasion to solicit favours in return, for he never does a small kindness without a view to asking a greater.

He deprecates excess in every thing, but always lives upon its confines.

Prayer enters not into his plan—he has nothing to ask, for he has all in himself—thanksgiving is still less his practice, for what he has he deserves.

He has read that 'to enjoy is to obey,' and he is always ready to give this cheerful proof of the most unlimited obedience. He respects the laws of the country, especially such as guard property and game, and eagerly punishes the violators of both. But as to the laws of God, he thinks they were made to guard the possessions of the rich, to punish the vicious poor, and to frighten those who have nothing to lose. Yet he respects some of the commandments, and would placard on every post and pillar that which says 'thou shalt not steal;' whilst he thinks that which says 'thou shalt not covet' might be expunged from the decalogue.

If you happen to speak of the helplessness of man, he thinks you are alluding to some paralytic; if of his dependence, to some hanger-on of a great man; if of his sinfulness, he adopts your opinion, for he reads the Newgate calendar. But of sin, as an inherent principle, of the turpitude of sin, except as it disturbs society, he knows nothing; but religion as a principle of action, but prayer as a source of peace or a ground of hope, he neither knows nor desires to know. The stream of life glides smoothly on without it; why should he ruffle its placid flow? why should he break in on the course of enjoyment with self-imposed austerities? He believes himself to be respected by his fellow-men, and the favour of God is not in all his thoughts. His real character the great day of decision will discover. Till then he will have two characters.

'Soul take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for thee,' is perhaps the state of all others, which most disqualifies and unfits for prayer. Not only the apostrophe excites the bodily appetite, but the SOUL is called upon to contemplate, to repose on, the soothing prospect, the delights of that voluptuousness for which the 'much goods are laid up.' Thou fool! that soul which thou wouldest quicken to such base enjoyment, that soul shall this night be required of thee.

Thus we see what restrains prayer in these two classes of characters. The sceptic does not pray, because he does not believe that God is a hearer of prayer. The voluptuary, because he believes that God is such a one as himself, and because he has already gotten all that he wants of Him. His gold, and the means of gratifying his sensuality, would not be augmented by the dry duties of devotion; and with an exercise which would increase neither, he can easily dispense.

Errors in Prayer, which may hinder its being answered.—The proud man's Prayer.—The patient Christian—False Excuses under the pretence of Inability.

ALL desire the gifts of God, but they do not desire God. If we profess to love him, it is for our sake: when shall we begin to love him for himself? Many who do not go the length of omitting prayer, but pray merely from custom, or education, frequently complain that they find no benefit from prayer; others, that they experience not the support and comfort promised to it. May not those who thus complain, and who perhaps are far from being enemies to religion, find, on a serious examination of their own hearts and lives, some irregularity in desire, similar to that just mentioned, to be the cause of their discontent, and alleged disappointment?

We are more disposed to lay down rules for the regulation of God's government, than to submit our will to it as he has settled it. If we do not now see the efficacy of the prayer which he has enjoined us to present to him, it may yet be producing its effect in another way. Infinite wisdom is not obliged to inform us of the manner, or the time of his operations; what he expects of us is to persevere in the duty. The very obedience to the command is no small thing, whatever be its perceptible effects.

Under the apparent failure of our prayers, the source of our repinings must be looked for in the fact of our own blindness and imperfection; for the declarations of the Gospel are sure; their answer must be found in the grace of God in Christ Jesus, for his mercies are infallible. Wherever there is disappointment, we may be assured that it is not because he is wanting to us, but because we are wanting to ourselves.

The prophet's expression, 'the iniquity of our holy things,' will not be thoroughly understood except by those who thus seriously dive into the recesses of their own heart, feel their deficiencies, mark their wanderings, detect and lament their vain imaginations and impertinent thoughts. It is to be regretted that these worldly trifles are far more apt to intrude on us in prayer, than the devout affections excited by prayer are to follow us into the world. Busi-

ness and pleasure break in on our devotions; when will the spirit of devotion mix with the concerns of the world?

You who lament the disappointment of your requests, suffer a few friendly hints.—Have you not been impatient because you receive not the things that you asked, at your own time? How do you know that if you had persevered God might have bestowed them in His time? He certainly would, had He not in his wisdom foreseen they would not have been good for you; and therefore, in His mercy withheld them. Is there not some secret, unsuspected infidelity lurking behind such impatience? Is it not virtually saying, there is no God to hear, or that He is unfaithful to His promises? For is it not absolute impiety to insinuate an accusation that the Supreme Judge of men and angels is capable of injustice, or liable to error? God has pleasure in the prosperity of His children. He neither grants nor denies any thing which is not accurately weighed and measured; which is not exactly suited to their good, if not to their request.

If we pray aright, it may please God not only to grant that for which we pray, but that for which we do not pray. Supplicating for the best things, we may receive inferior and unrequested things, as was the case with Solomon in his prayer for wisdom. God will not forget our labour of love. If he does not seem to notice it at present, he may lay it by for a time when it may be more wanted.

In prayer we must take care not to measure our necessities by our desires; the former are few, the latter may be insatiable. A murmuring spirit is a probable cause why our petitions are not granted. The certain way to prevent our obtaining what we desire, or enjoying what we have, is to feel impatient at what we do not receive, or to make an improper use of what has been granted to our prayers.

Or you may perhaps address God with sinister and corrupt views; as if you had left his omniscience out of his attributes; as if you thought him such an one as yourself; as if he might be entrapped with the 'secret ambush of a specious prayer.' Your design in the application of the boon you solicit may not be for his glory. It may be the prayer of ambition, cloaked under the guise of more extensive usefulness; it may be the prayer of covetousness, under the pretext of providing for your family. It may be the prayer of injustice, a petition for success in some undertaking for yourself, to the circumvention of another's fairer claim. God, in mercy to our souls, refuses the gift which would endanger them.

Thus, then, if we ask and receive not, because we ask deceitfully or blindly, we must not wonder if our prayers are not answered. Or, if we obtain what we solicit, and turn it to a bad account, or to no account at all, we must not be surprised if Divine grace is withheld, or withdrawn.

The same ill results may be expected if we ask formally, or carelessly. Who has not felt, that there is a kind of mechanical memory in the tongue, which runs over the form, without any aid of the understanding, without any concurrence of the will, without any consent of the affections? For do we not sometimes implore God to hear a prayer, to which we ourselves are not attending? And is not this presumptuously to demand from him that attention, which we ourselves are not giving to our own requests, even while we were in the act of making them?

A mere superficial form, by lulling the conscience, hardens the heart. The task is performed, but in what manner, or to what result is not inquired. Genuine prayer is the homage of the soul to God, and not an expedient to pacify Him.

If you observe the form, but forget the dispositions it is intended to produce, it is evident the end of such prayer is not answered. Yet be not so far discouraged by feeling no sensible effect from prayer as to discontinue it; it is still a right thing to be found in the way of duty.

But, perhaps, you neglect to implore the Spirit of Christ towards the direction of your prayers, and His intercession for their acceptance. As there is no other name through which we can be saved, so there is no other through which we can be heard: we must not sever his mediation from his atonement. All His divine offices are not only in perfect harmony, but in inseparable union.* Or, perhaps, you have used the name of the Redeemer for form's sake, or as an accustomed close to your petitions, without imploring his efficacious grace in changing your heart, as well as in pardoning your sins.

Perhaps you think it is a sufficient qualification for acceptable prayer, that you are always forming good intentions; now, though these make up the value of good actions, yet good intentions, not acted upon when occasion invites and duty calls, will not lessen, but inflame the reckoning. For does it not look as if you had resisted the offer of that Holy Spirit, which had originally prompted the intention? And may it not induce Him to withdraw his blessed influences, when they have been both invited and rejected?

Do you never, by unwholesome reading, fill the mind with images unfavourable to serious exercises? The children of the pure and holy God should feed on the bread of their father's house, and not on the husks of the prodigal!

Do you never use profanely or lightly, that name, which is above every name? He who made the ear, shall he not hear? and if he has heard, during the day, his awful name used by the thoughtless as an expletive, or an imprecation, will he in the morning be called on as a Saviour, and in the evening as an intercessor?

But no profession of faith, however orthodox, no avowal of trust in Christ, however confident, no intreaty for the aid of the Spirit, however customary, will avail, if it be not such an influential faith, such a practical trust, such a living devotedness, as shall be productive of holiness of heart and life, as shall tend to produce obedience to the commands, and submission to the will of God.—This is an infallible test, by which you may try every doctrine, every principle of the gospel. We do not mean the truth of them,

* We observe with regret, that, in many forms of prayer, the aid of his mediation is much more frequently implored, than the benefits of his death and merits. He is, indeed, our divine Intercessor, but his mere intercession is not the whole source of our dependence on him.

for that is immutable; but your own actual belief, your own actual interest in them. If no such effects are visible, we deceive ourselves, and the principles we defend, are not those by which we are governed.

Prayer is so obviously designed to humble the proud heart of the natural man, by giving him a feeling sense of his misery, his indigence, and his helplessness, that we should be unwilling to believe, that even the proudest man can carry his pride to the Throne of Grace, except to supplicate deliverance from it; yet such a character is actually drawn by him who knew the thoughts and intents of the heart of man, and a little consideration will teach us, that the 'two men who went up into the temple to pray,' were not intended as individual portraits, but as specimens of a class.

The proud man does not perhaps always thank God that he is not guilty of adultery, or extortion, to which vices he may have little temptation; nor does he glory in paying tithes and taxes, to which the law would compel him. Yet is he never disposed, like the Pharisee, to proclaim the catalogue of his own virtues? to bring in his comparative claims, as if it were a good thing to be better than the bad? Is he never disposed to carry in his eye, (as if he would remind his Maker of his superiority,) certain persons who are possibly less the objects of Divine displeasure, than he, by his pride and selfishness may have rendered himself; although his regularity in the forms of devotion may have made him more respectable in the world, than the poor reprobated being whom he praises God he does not resemble. It is the abasement, the touching self-condemnation, the avowed poverty, the pleaded misery of the destitute beggar that finds acceptance. It is the hungry whom God's mercy fills with good things, it is the rich in his own conceit, whom his displeasure sends empty away.

Whenever you are tempted to thank God that you are not like other men, compare your own condition with that of the afflicted and the bereaved among your own friends; compare yourself with the paralytic on his couch, with the blind beggar by the way-side, with the labourer in the mine; think on the wretch in the galleys; on the condemned in the dungeons of despotic governments; on the miserable beings in our own prisons, those loathsome abodes of sin and wretchedness. Above all, think, and this is the intolerable acme of sin in the inflictor, and of misery in the sufferer; think on the wretched negro chained in the hold of a slave ship! Think seriously on these, and put pride into your prayer if you can. Think on these, not to triumph in your own superiority, but to adore the undeserved mercy of God, in giving you advantages to which you have no higher claim, and let your praise of yourself be converted into prayer for them.

For there are no dispositions of the heart which are more eminently promoted by prayer, than contentment and patience. They are two qualities of the same colour, but of different shades, and are generally, when found at all, found in the same breast. Both are the offspring of genuine religion, both nurtured by cordial prayer. The cultivation of the one, under easy circumstances, prepares for the exercises of the other under more trying situations. Both emanate from the same divine principle, but are drawn out by different occasions, and varying circumstances.

Content is the tranquillity of the heart, prayer is its aliment; it is satisfied under every dispensation of Providence, and takes thankfully its allotted portion, never enquiring whether a little more would not be a little better; knowing, that if God had so judged, it would have been as easy for him to have given the more as the less. That is not true content, which does not enjoy as the gift of infinite wisdom what it has, nor is that true patience, which does not suffer meekly the loss of what it had, because it is not his will that it should have it longer.

The contentment of the irreligious man is apathy, his patience either pride or insensibility. The language of the patient man under trials is, it is the Lord.—Shall a living man complain? is his interrogation. 'A good man,' says Solomon, 'is satisfied from himself.' Here the presumptuous might put in *his* claim to the title. But his pretension arises from his mistake, for his satisfaction is *with himself*, that of the Christian with Providence; it arises from the grace of God shed abroad in his heart, which is become a perennial spring of consolation and enjoyment; and which, by persevering prayer, is indented into his very soul. Content knows how to want and how to abound; this is the language of equanimity: 'shall I not receive evil from the hand of the Lord, as well as good,' this is the language of patience in speaking of Providence. Content is always praising God for what she possesses; patience is always justifying Him for what she suffers. The cultivation of the one effectually prepares us for the exercise of the other. But these dispositions are not inherent in the human heart. How are they generated? by the influences of the Holy Spirit. How are they kept alive? by heart-felt devotion.

The prosperous man of the world, exulting in any recent success, may acknowledge, 'the Lord gave,' but it is only Christian patience can say, 'the Lord taketh away,' and even bless Him for the resumption of His gift. The contented, patient Christian, has the same keen feelings, the same fond attachments with other men, for, though his passions are regulated by religion, they are not totally extinguished.

Under the pressure of any affliction, *thy will be done*, as it is the patient Christian's unceasing prayer, so it is the ground of his unvarying practice. In this brief petition he finds his whole duty comprised and expressed. It is the unprompted request of his lips, it is the motto inscribed on his heart, it is the principle which regulates his life, it is the voice which says to the stormy passions, 'Peace! be still!' Let others expostulate, he submits. Nay, even submission does not adequately express his feelings. We frequently submit, not so much from duty as from necessity; we submit, because we cannot help ourselves. Resignation sometimes may be mere acquiescence in the sovereignty, rather than conviction of the wisdom and goodness of God; while the patient Christian not

only yields to the dispensation, but adores the dispenser. He not only submits to the blow, but vindicates the hand which inflicts it; 'the Lord is righteous in all his ways.' He refers to the chastisement as a proof of the affection of the chastiser. 'I know that in very faithfulness thou hast caused me to be afflicted.' He recurs to the thoughtlessness of his former prosperity. 'Before I was afflicted I went astray,' and alludes to the trial less as a punishment than a paternal correction. If he prays for a removal of the present suffering, he prays also that it may not be removed from him, till it has been sanctified to him. He will not even part from the trial till he has laid hold on the benefit.

Perhaps the impediment which hinders the benefit of prayer in characters apparently correct, may be the fatal habit of indulging in some secret sin, the private cherishing of some wrong propensity, the entertaining of some evil imagination. Not being accustomed to control at other times, it intrudes when you would willingly expel it; for a guest which is unreservedly let in at other seasons, and cordially entertained, will too frequently break in when you desire to be alone.

The Scriptures are explicit on this subject. It is not merely the committing actual sin that ruins the comfort growing out of prayer; the divine prohibition runs higher; its interdiction is more intimately interior; it extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The door of heaven is shut against prayer under such circumstances. 'If I regard iniquity in my *heart*, the Lord will not hear me.' A cherished corruption in the mind is the more likely to interpose between God and the soul, because it does not assume the shape and bulk of crime. A practical offence, the effect of sudden temptation, is more likely to be followed by keen repentance, deep self-abasement, and fervent application for pardon; whereas to the close bosom sin, knowing that no human charge can be brought against it, the soul secretly returns with a fondness facilitated by long indulgence, and only whetted by a short separation. Vain, covetous, malignant, impure thoughts, habitually fostered by the imagination, are more likely to start out into action, are a more probable preparation for a bolder sin, than many who indulge them believe or intend.

It was, perhaps, this acute, experimental feeling which led David to pray to be delivered from 'secret sins;' these, he was probably conscious, had led to those 'presumptuous sins,' which had entangled his soul and embittered his life; and whose dominion he so frequently and fervently deprecates. This, it is to be feared, may be the case with some, whose language and exterior cause them to be ranked with the religious; these are, at least, the dangers to which they are most exposed. It is, therefore, that our Lord connects, in indissoluble union, watching with prayer.

Perhaps, when the conscience is more than usually awakened, you pray with some degree of fervour to be delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin. But, if you stop here, your devotion is most imperfect. If you do not also pray to be delivered from its power and dominion over your heart and life, you do not go much further than the heathens of old. They seem to have had a strong feeling of guilt, by their fond desire of expiating it by their sacrifices and lustrations.

Of their terror of its punishment we have many intimations in their fables; for what is fable to us, was probably to them obscure history, or wild tradition worked up into an absurd but amusing mythology. The eternity of their punishments is strongly implied in the insatiable thirst and ungratified appetites of Tantalus; his misery augmented by that flowing water and those tempting fruits which hung in his sight and mocked his appetites, not unlike the anguish of Dives, which was rendered more intolerable by beholding the blessedness of those on the other side of the great gulf. The profitless toils of Sisyphus, and of the daughters of Danaus, whose ever failing efforts prove their labours to be infinite, and their punishment eternal. The wheel of Ixion, which, as it was to be in perpetual motion, so the punishment was to have no end; a doctrine not so strongly held by many Christians, as it seems to be implied in this blind mythology.

Will you not then be most unweariedly fervent in prayer to the God of mercy for deliverance from the dominion of that sin which, if not forsaken as well as lamented, will be inevitably followed by that punishment which you deprecate, and which will never end? But such is the love of present ease, and the desire of respite, that you think, perhaps, it is better not 'to be tormented before the time.' How many now in a state of irreversible misery wish they had been tormented sooner, that they might not be tormented forever! But with you it is not yet too late. With you the day of grace, which to them is over, is not yet past. Use it then without delay, instead of persisting in laying up fresh regrets for eternity.

But too many deceive themselves, by imagining that when they have pronounced their prayer, the duty is accomplished with the task, the occult medicine being taken, the charm is to work of itself. They consider it as a duty quite distinct and unconnected with any other. They forget that it is to produce in them a principle which is to mix with all the occurrences of the day. Prayer, though not intended as a talisman, is yet proposed as a remedy. The effect of its operation is to be seen in assisting to govern the temper, in bridling the tongue, in checking, not only calumny but levity, not only impure, but vain conversation.

But we have a wonderful talent at deceiving ourselves. We have not a fault for which we do not find an apology. Our ingenuity on this head is inexhaustible. In matters of religion men complain that they are weak, a complaint they are not forward to urge in worldly matters. They lament that their reluctance to pray arises from being unable to do what God, in his word, expects them to do. But is not this virtual rebellion, only with a smooth face and a soft name? God is too wise not to know exactly what we *can* do, and too just to expect from us what we *cannot*.

This pretence of weakness, though it looks

like humility, is only a mask for indolence and a screen for selfishness.

We certainly *can* refuse to indulge ourselves in what pleases us, when we know it displeases God. We *can* obey his commandments with the aid of the infused strength which he has promised, and which we *can* ask. It is not He who is unwilling to give, but we who are averse to pray. The temptations to vice are strengthened by our passions, as our motives to virtue are weakened by them.

Our spiritual enemy would not be so potent, if we ourselves did not put arms into his hands. The world would not be so powerful an enchantress, if we did not assist the enchantment, by voluntarily yielding to it; by insensibly forsaking Him who is our strength. We make apologies for yielding to both by pleading their power and our own weakness. But the inability to resist is of our own making. Both enemies are indeed powerful but they are not irresistible. If we assert the contrary, is it not virtually saying 'greater are they who are against us than He that is for us?'

But we are traitors to our own cause; we are conquered by our own consent; we surrender, not so much because the conqueror is powerful, as because the conquered is willing.

Without diminishing any thing of *His* grace and glory, to whom every good thought we think, every victory over sin we obtain, is owing—may it not add to our happiness, even in heaven, to look back on every conflict we maintained with our grand spiritual enemy, every triumph over the world, every victory over ourselves? Will not the remembrance of one act of resistance then, far surpass every gratification now, which the three confederated enemies of our souls may present to us?

It is not merely by our prayers that we must give glory to God. Our Divine Master has expressly told us wherein His Father is glorified; it is 'when we bring forth much fruit.' It is by our works we shall be judged, and not by our prayers. And what a final consummation is it that obedience to the will of God, which is our duty here, shall be our nature hereafter! What is now our prayer shall then be our possession; there the obligation to obey shall become a necessity, and that necessity shall be happiness ineffable.

The various evils here enumerated with many others not touched upon, are so many dead weights on the wings of prayer; they cause it to gravitate to earth, obstruct its ascent, and hinder it from piercing to the throne of God.

God our Father.—Our Unwillingness to please Him.—Forms of Prayer.—Great and Little Sins.—All Sin an Offence against God.—Benefit of Habitual Prayer.

The distinction between the personal nature of Faith, and the universal character of Charity, as it is exercised in prayer, are specifically exhibited in the two pronouns which stand at the head of the Creed and of the Lord's Prayer. We cannot exercise faith for another, and therefore can only say, *I* believe. But when we offer up our petitions, we address them to *our* Father, implying that He is the author, governor, and supporter, not of ourselves only, but of his whole rational creation. It conveys also a beautiful idea of that boundless charity which links all mankind in one comprehensive brotherhood. The plural *us*, continued through the whole prayer, keeps up the sentiment with which it sets out, tends to exclude selfishness, and to excite philanthropy, by recommending to God the temporal as well as spiritual wants of the whole family of mankind.

The nomenclature of the Divinity is expressed in Scripture by every term which can convey ideas of grandeur or of grace, of power or of affection, of sublimity or tenderness, of majesty or benignity; by every name which can excite terror or trust, which can inspire awe or consolation.

But of all compellations by which the Supreme Being is designated in his holy word, there is not one more soothing, more attractive, more endearing than that of Father; it includes the idea of reconciliation, pardon, acceptance, love. It swallows up His grandeur in His beneficence. It involves also the inheritance belonging to our filial relation. It fills the mind with every image that is touching, and the heart with every feeling that is affectionate. It inspires fear softened by love, and authority mitigated by gratitude. The tenderest image the Psalmist could select from the abundant store-house of his rich conceptions to convey the kindest sentiment of God's pity towards them that fear Him, was that it resembles the pity of a 'father for his *own children*.' In directing us to pray to our Father, our Divine Master does not give the command without the example. He every where uses the term He recommends. 'I thank Thee, Oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth!' and in the 17th of St. John he uses this endearing name no less than seven times.

'Lord show us the Father and it sufficeth,' was the ill-understood prayer of the inquiring disciples. To us this petition is granted before it is made. Does He not show himself to all as a Father, in the wonders of his creation, in the wonders of our being, preservation, and support? Has he not, in a more especial manner, revealed Himself to us as a Father in the sublime wonders of his word, in the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the perpetuated gift of the Holy Spirit? Does He not show Himself our Father, if, when we have done evil, He withholds His chastening hand; if, when we have sinned, He still bears with us; if, when we are deaf to his call He repeats it; if, when we delay, He waits for us; if, when we repent, He pardons us; if, when we return, He receives us; if, when in danger, He preserves us from falling; and if, when we fall, He raises us?

We have a beautiful illustration of the goodness of God as a merciful and tender Father in the deeply affecting parable of the Prodigal Son. Though the undone spendthrift knew that he had no possible claim on the goodness he had so notoriously offended, yet he felt that the endearing name of Father had an eloquence

that might plead forgiveness of his offence, though he feared not for a restoration to affection and favour. But while he only meekly aspired to a place among the servants, while he only humbly pleaded for a little of their redundant bread, he was received as a pardoned, reconciled, beloved child.

Yet the human heart is not easily warmed into gratitude, or softened into love, or allured to imitation, because it takes only slight and transient views of the divine benignity.—What God has done for us, and what we have really done against ourselves, will, in the great day of decision, crown Him with glory, and ourselves with shame. What we think we do for our own benefit in temporal concerns is so animated, so earnest, so unremitted—what are we called to do for God—which ultimately, indeed, would be done for ourselves—is so little, so reluctant, so heartless, as to bear no sort of comparison. In the former case, every thing is a gratification; in the latter every thing is a sacrifice.

We think much of the smallest instance of self-denial if it be for God; if it be an act of acknowledgment to the most gracious of all Fathers; if it be a tribute of homage to the King of Kings, however large or lasting the promised recompense. But we think little of any present privation of our own, if it insure to us a a longer subsequent enjoyment, though but for a season.

In speaking of the manner in which we should address our Heavenly Father, it is to be observed there may be evident differences in the state, both of the mind and circumstances, for which the best written forms of prayer can make no provision. We ourselves can alone know those varieties, and the petitions which expressly belong to them. We are sometimes under the influence of particular tempers, which we wish to cultivate and improve; in this case, we shall naturally use addresses very different from those which the prevalence of unfavourable tempers or wrong dispositions require.

As to the outward events in which we are concerned—for *accident* is a term which has no place in the Christian's vocabulary—God in every dispensation is at work for our good. In more prosperous circumstances He tries our gratitude; in mediocrity our contentment; in misfortunes our submision; and as every new situation calls into exercise some new virtue, by consequence it calls for some alteration in the mode of our devotions. The prayers of yesterday and to day will consequently be as different as the circumstances—these are some of the advantages of private over public prayer.

The great and general topics, are, however, of a fixed, unalterable nature, on which, though we may be more or less diffuse, according to the state of the mind, yet the term and spirit will require little variation. This is more especially the case with respect to praise and thanksgiving; and to express these, the use of stated forms may occasionally come in with much advantage, as the cardinal points to be expressed here must be ever the same. Invariably must the glory and honour of whatever is good be ascribed to the great source of light and life, the giver of every good and perfect gift; and the addition in secret, of particular clauses of praise for personal mercies, will not be difficult to find where gratitude is really felt.

A deep sense of his corruption will powerfully draw the real penitent to an humbling avowal of sin in prayer; but it is to be feared that some, who, because they cannot charge themselves with flagrant offences, do not consider a contrite confession of the sins of the heart, and of the daily life, an indispensable part of their devotions. But God will charge many with sin who neglect to charge themselves. Did they attend to the remonstrance of a conscience not laid asleep by neglect, or quieted by palliatives, they would find that were the daily *omissions* alone, of even their best days, registered and presented to them; they would form no inconsiderable catalogue for repentance.

There are too many who do not consider that all sins are equally a breach of the Divine law. Without pretending to bring all sins, small and great, to one common level, we should remember that *all* sin is an offence against a gracious Father.

In that profoundly self-abasing prayer of David, after the commission of the two black offences which disgraced his otherwise exemplary life; though he deeply felt his barbarous treatment of his brave general, in first dishonouring his wife, and then exposing him to meet inevitable death in fore-front of the hottest battle—yet, in praying to be delivered from this blood-guiltiness, he bequeathed an important lession to posterity, when in the lowly prostration at the throne of God, his first cry was, 'against *Thee*, *Thee* only, have I sinned, and done this evil in *Thy* sight,' plainly declaring, that all sin is, in the first instance, a sin against God.

While the most worldly are ready enough to exclaim against notorious sins, or against any sins carried to the greatest excess, to smaller offences they contrive to be tolerably reconciled. They think the commission of these not inconsistent with the profitable use of prayer in their formal way of using this customary exercise.

They are also sufficiently lenient to certain degrees of great sins; and various are the modifications and distinctions in their logic, and not over-correct the gradations in their moral scale of degrees. They do not consider that it is the extirpation, and not merely the reduction, of any sin, which is to procure them that peace and comfort for which they sometimes pray, and which they wonder they do not receive as an answer to their prayers.

They forget that the evil of sin is not to be measured by its magnitude only, but by the spirit of disobedience which it indicates towards a generous Father,—a Father whose commands are all founded in mercy and love, and who considers every voluntary fault as no light offence when committed against supreme authority, exercised with perfect tenderness.

But it is their reluctance to part with the remaining degrees, their wish to retain these modified sins; it is their favourite reserves to which they still cling, that prevent that peace which is promised to the victory, I had almost said to the omnipotance, of prayer.

For it is not so much the nicely measured quantity, as the nature of sin, which constitutes its malignity, and obstructs the benefit of prayer. The inferior degree which is cherished, will, without earnest supplication to God, be ready to become the excess which is deprecated, whenever the appropriate temptation shall present itself. For, however our compassionate Father may pardon the unpremeditated fault, yet how can we expect Him to forgive any degree of sin that is allowed, that is even, in a certain measure, intended to be committed? Diminution, however, is a favourable step, if, by perseverance in prayer, it leads gradually to extirpation.

Habitual prayer may prove a most effectual check to any doubtful or wrong action, to which circumstances may invite us during the day on which we are entering—the very petition to our Heavenly Father—'deliver us us from evil,' forcibly felt and sincerely expressed, may preserve us from being seduced into it. And is not the praying Christian less likely to 'fall into temptation,' than they who neglect to pray that they may not be led into it?

The right dispositions of the heart, and the fervour of devotion reciprocally excite each other. A holy temper sends us to prayer, and prayer promotes that temper. Every act of thanksgiving tends to make us more grateful, and augmented gratitude excites more devout thanksgiving.

The act of confession renders the heart more contrite, and deeper contrition induces a more humbling avowal of sin. Each, and all, send us more cordially to the Redeemer: the more fervent the prayer, the more entire is the prostration of the whole man at the foot of the cross.

The Doctrine of Imputed Sanctification, newly adopted.—The old one of Progressive Sanctification newly rejected.—Both Doctrines injurious to Prayer.—St. Paul's Character.

We have hitherto spoken of errors in prayer. We come now to errors of opinion, which supersede the necessity of prayer itself. There are moral as well as speculative corruptions gaining ground amongst us, and there is an involution of one in the folds of the other. When men once indulge themselves in any deviation from the course so plainly marked out, in that only unerring *road-book*, the gospel of Jesus Christ, they can never be sure where the first turning off may lead them.

When a man, with more ingenuity than sober judgment, wishes to introduce a novel error; in order to work successfully, and prevent the suspicion of his design, he commonly seizes on some acknowledged truth for his basis. On this truth he raises his own fanciful superstructure, but with little departure at first from his avowed design; so that his gradual deviation from it makes the error continue still to look so much like truth, that ordinary observers will not easily detect where the old truth ends, or where the new fabrication totally changes the character of the original edifice.

The great and glorious doctrine of the New Testament was to exalt the Saviour and to humble the sinner; the new doctrine is to exalt the sinner also, and in that proportion to establish and secure him in sin. For if the Saviour's righteousness by transfer becomes so far the believer's righteousness, as to become, in the new language, his own personal holiness, he has in his own person 'whereof to glory,' and any further attainment is anomalous; or at best this transfer is even less rational, and evidently more removed from common sense as well as from charity, than the doctrine of supererogation itself; for that only teaches that some men were rich in good works enough and to spare; but this, instead of the friendly disposal of such superfluous wealth, teaches that we have none worth keeping, and that if we had there is a provision made for rendering it utterly useless.

A distorted truth, then, is worse than an original falsehood, because it deceives the injudicious and ill-informed by retaining some little vestige of the truth they had been taught to venerate. Thus, they who pretend to add new glory to the character and offices of Christ, are in effect dishonouring by misrepresenting him. It is a fearful fact, that the holiest doctrine may be perverted, till, instead of its being the source of salvation, it becomes a fountain of impiety. Instead of humbling the sinner, it confirms him in sin; instead of purifying, it corrupts; instead of sobering, it inebriates; and lands him on a daring and presumptuous confidence. Instead of promoting the cause of God, as it professes, it advances that of Satan. It is a false light which leads to utter darkness, for 'if the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!'

This error is so much worse than any other sin, as by fair and legitimate deduction it renders all virtue anomalous, and consequently all prayer ridiculous. Virtue cannot be needed, where to be like-minded with Christ is replaced, or made synonymous with having his holiness substituted for our own; and prayer cannot be upheld in any one of its essential qualities, where no room is left in the heart for self-distrust, meekness, lowliness of spirit, the fear of offending God, and the sense of dependance on him for 'more grace.'

Much has also been advanced in favour of another kindred doctrine, a doctrine with which St. Peter must have been utterly unacquainted, when he exhorted his converts to 'GROW in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.' The preceding opinion having encouraged the new proselytes, for they can create as well as destroy, has called another into existence, *that there is no such thing as progressive sanctification.* This novel doctrine, if practically adopted, would not fail to contribute its full share to the extermination of any remains of moral goodness, which its precursor might have left behind. It may indeed deserve some little toleration, when its founder shall have been able to produce one individual child of Adam, who is already as good as he ought to be, or even as he might have been.

If this doctrine be true, a large portion of Scripture must be abandoned to the clippers and mutilators of the sacred volume; for what becomes of the gracious promise of being 'renew-

ed from day to day?' what of the precept 'to increase and abound more and more?' what of the incessant inculcation of this command, repeated in all the various forms which language could supply; a command of which neither the variety of the illustration, nor of the language which conveys it, ever alters the idea, an idea which, like a golden thread, runs through the whole fabric of the New Testament.

We have been accustomed to hear that fervent prayer, through the influence of the Divine Spirit, is the grand instrument of this renewal; and it is on this ground that we have ventured to introduce the subject here as connected with the general design of these pages. But the present doctrine completes what the former had commenced, and renders prayer wholly inapplicable to all spiritual ends: it leaves us nothing to implore, but merely temporal advantages; to ask for things only which will end when this life ends. It would abolish the necessity of every petition in the Lord's prayer, except that for our daily bread.

Why will not those who profess to make the Bible the only rule of their faith and practice, learn from that Bible, that diffidence and reverential awe, a frank avowal of their own ignorance, a humble withholding from intruding into unrevealed things, and devout gratitude for the glorious things which are revealed, best become blind, ignorant and dependent creatures?

If this newly invented doctrine were true, what would become of the useless interval of life, useless as to all possibility of improvement, which is the great end of life, the interval between the decisive moment of complete sanctification and our closing scene?

The unanswerable argument in favour of progressive holiness, is the progress itself. The man to whom it was asserted, that there was no such thing as motion, made the most definitive answer,—he got up and walked.

Every advance of the Christian inclines him to push on to still further advances. But under the influence of this stationary principle the busy current of life would become a stagnant pool. It is motion which gives the sense of spiritual, as well as natural life. It is progress which gives the sustaining feeling; not of independent, but of infused strength. Hope, which is the pulse of spiritual life, would not only intermit, but stand still. 'Is this all,' would the disappointed Christian say? 'Shall I never be more holy than I now am? I do not find the right sort of rest in being a fixture.' Torpor is not ease, numbness is not relief. It is exercise, not indolence, which induces safe and wholesome repose.

New difficulties, fresh trials, unknown temptations may yet assail us in our mortal journey, which will require new applications to the Throne of Grace for support. With that support promised to prayer, though 'Alps on Alps arise,' we need not be discouraged. For if our progress be an upward, it is an onward path, and the acclivity diminishes the higher we ascend. Difficulties may be great, but with the grace of God they will not be insuperable. God is not only strong, but Strength. Yet let us not aim at an assent above our promised support. In aspiring to reach a visionary elevation, we lose the height we had actually gained.

It is curious to observe, how naturally one invention involves another. We find an instructive illustration of this truth in a Pagan fable. Dædalus was not only made a prisoner himself in the labyrinth of his own projecting, but like the projectors of the new theological metaphysics, he was no sooner involved in its mazes, than he went on to study a new and still wilder contrivance. But his next invention, his wings of wax, in which he trusted to secure his flight, in their ultimate result betrayed their insufficiency. His incautious companion, by mounting above the prescribed region of safety, exposed his artificial wings to be melted by the sun, as a punishment for approaching it too nearly. His fate was the inevitable consequence of his temerity.

If we were completely and instantaneously sanctified, such a state would boldly contradict the character of our human condition, every where described in Scripture, namely, that life is to the end a journey, a conflict, a race, a warfare, whereas in the new scheme all would be peace; the Christian would have no more to tempt, no more to fear, no more to resist, in short, earth would be heaven.

Every thing that is great is progressive.—The noblest things are the longest in attaining their perfection. This analogy subsists in nature, and in grace. Surely, then, there is no assignable period, when our virtues will be incapable of addition; when our duties will be finished; when our piety will have soared to such a pitch as to render a higher elevation impossible, as to render prayer, not only unnecessary, but absurd.

Saint Paul's conversion was indeed instantaneous, but it was miraculous. Yet though it was attended with circumstances peculiar to itself; though the shining light from heaven surrounded him; though, to evidence the miracle, he heard the voice of the Lord Jesus himself; though his natural sight was taken from him, preparatory to the opening of his spiritual eyes; though his change was of this distinguished character, yet did he stop short there? So far from it, he only began to cry out, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to *do*? Thus we see, that the instantaneous conversion was prayer; practical prayer; prayer with involved doing; prayer which denoted progress.

If ever progressive sanctification was exhibited in the life, as well as writings, of any one man more than another, it was in this heroic champion of divine truth. If ever one man more than another had a right to depend on his own safe state, it was the divinely illuminated Saint Paul.

Yet did *he* spend his after-life in self-satisfaction and indolent security? Did *he* ever cease to watch, or pray, or labour? Did *he* ever cease to press the duty of prayer on his most established converts? Did *he*, in the confidence of supremely eminent gifts, ever cease himself to pray? Were *his* exertions ever abridged? *His* self-denial ever diminished? Did *he* rest satisfied with present, though supernatural attainments? Did *he* remember the things which were behind? Did *he* live upon the good he

had already done, or the grace he had already received? Did *he* count himself to have attained? Did he stop in the race set before him? Did not he press forward? Did not his endeavours grow with his attainments? Did not his humility, and sense of dependence outstrip both? If *he* feared being a castaway, after the unutterable things he had seen and heard, and after the wonders he had achieved, shall the best man on earth be contented to remain as he is? If it were attempted, the most sanguine man on earth would find it to be impossible; nothing either in nature or in grace 'continueth in one stay.' He who does not advance, is already gone back. —This glorious, because humble Apostle, went on in progressive sanctification, he continued to grow and to pray, till he at length attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

But what enabled this unparalleled man to maintain to the end, this painful conflict? It was the same support which is still offered to the meanest Christian. It was humble, fervent, persevering prayer. It was the spirit of supplication, infused and sustained by 'the renewing of the Holy Ghost,' and presented through the divine Mediator.

And what the Apostle did in his own person, we repeat, he unweariedly pressed upon all his converts. He exhorted them to pray for themselves, and for each other, in the same spirit in which 'he bowed his own knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; that they might be rooted and grounded in love; that they might know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that they might be filled with all the fulness of God.'

It is obvious why God does not give us the full measure of his grace; it is in order that we may be induced to pray for it; and that prayer which we are commanded continually to repeat for greater degrees of grace, is a standing proof of that imperfection in us which requires it, is a perpetual intimation, that we stand in need of fresh supplies, and larger measures of this superinduced strength than we have yet attained.

A sincere Christian must know, because he must feel, that he is an imperfect Christian; and to rest satisfied in a state of imperfection is not 'fighting the good fight,' is not 'finishing our course' in the way our beginning promised. As we advance, Providence assigns us new employments, new trials. Sanctification will never have reached its ultimate point, without that persevering progress which the Scriptures every where inculcate. Do we not rob ourselves of the reward promised to those who strive to go on unto perfection, if we are stopped short by the fatal delusion, that we have already reached it?

There is a fearful denunciation in the Apocalypse, and it is made the closing passage of the sacred canon; it is made a fence, as it were to shield divine truth from the additions and mutilations of bold intruders; no less than a tremendous menace, that 'to him who adds unto these things, God shall add to him the plagues written in this book. To him that takes away, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.'

Character of those who expect salvation for their Good Works.—Of those who depend on a Cqreless Nominal Faith.—Both these characters unfavourable to Prayer.—Christianity a Religion of Love which disposes to Prayer, exhibited in a third character.

We proceed now to make some observation on two different classes of Christians, who, without neglecting prayer, obstruct its efficacy by certain opinions in immediate connection with their practice; opinions, which, though in direct opposition to each other, yet, if Christianity be true, are neither of them safe.

The one, with a pretence of faith, profess to know God; but in works, in a great measure deny him; the other are working out their own salvation, but it is without fear or trembling; they work in their own strength, without looking unto God to enable them 'to will and to do of His good pleasure.'

While multitudes are ruining themselves by a fatal reliance on the merit of their own works, it is, perhaps, not saying too much to assert that more are undone by a loose, traditional, unexamined dependence on the Saviour. If many are wrong who think to purchase heaven by their own industry, more err by this cheaper mode of an indefinite and careless reliance on the ill-understood promises of the Gospel. If we cannot, of these two evils, determine which is greatest, it would not be difficult to prove that both are equally unfavourable to fervent prayer.

The careless liver who trusts in an unfounded hope, deceives, himself, because he thinks his trust, though he never inquires into it, looks more like grace.

Good works are rather less likely to deceive always, because those who maintain their superiority as a doctrine, cannot but see how far they fall themselves in practice, short of their profession; so far as to render it evident, that good works are with much greater sedulity performed by that sound class of Christians, who utterly reject any confidence in the performance of them. The former make salvation the easiest possible acquisition; the other believe it to be difficult, but fancy that the difficulty is to be overcome by a few more good deeds; which shall we say is the more misleading opinion?

Yet it must be confessed, that in this age of speculative religion, many do not sufficiently insist on these indispensable indications of a true and lively faith. For, after all, are not the right actions of a consistently holy life, the most unequivocal outward signs of an inward and spiritual grace? Not to insist on them, is to despise the value of those substantial evidences which our Lord himself made the criterion by which to judge of men,—'by their fruits ye shall know them.' The tree of life is no barren tree; it bears all manner of fruits.

There is indeed less necessity than ever to decry good works. Men are not so violently addicted to them, as, by the warnings given against them, one might be led to suppose. To exalt good works as the procuring cause of salvation, is to put them in the place of Christ. To depreciate good works, is to depreciate such a life as Christ has given us both the command, and

the example to lead; that command, of which the language was always one, 'if ye love me, keep my commandments;' and that example which presents such a tissue of holy actions, as nothing but Divinity could exhibit, yet enlightened and assisted humanity may and must aspire to imitate.

With this command and this example, devotion was always indissolubly connected.—Previously to giving his Divine pattern for the due performance of prayer, he alluded to the actual duty as already well understood and regularly practised; for doubtless he had habituated them to the duty, before he said, '*when* we pray,'—'After this manner therefore pray you.'

Faith is the principle which first led the sinner to apply for grace and mercy to the Redeemer of sinners. It is the same principle, which, by its gradual operation, leads to the renewing of his nature, the purifying his heart, and the sanctifying his conduct. This faith, with its practical consequences, must be sought for, by the only means through which it can be obtained, the influence of the Holy Spirit on humble, fervent, spiritual prayer.

But there is another, and, it is to be feared, a large class, who do good without being good. Though this may be too frequently the case; though it is the motive which determines on the quality of the action, yet, if the best action will not save the best man, there is little hope of its efficacy towards the salvation of a bad one.

Perhaps the man in question is charitable; but his charity may be stimulated by his vanity —a too common, but most misleading motive. Perhaps he does a deed of bounty from the too usual hope that this good action may be thrown into the opposite scale against a bad one; perhaps he hopes that his acts of benevolence may atone for the irregularities of a disorderly life—but, be this as it may, do not discourage his giving, let him continue to give, the act may improve the principle, he may in time detect the difference of his internal feelings in the performance of a good and bad action.—Perhaps the repetition of his good deeds may lead to a diminution of his bad ones. The passion of shame sometimes operates usefully, and every passion being under the control of God, may eventually be made the instrument of good.

And who does not remember instances in which the frequently repeated bounty was the unprompted feeling of a compassionate and liberal heart, of a heart tender and kind, though yet unsanctified by religion?

Yet who would restrain the right action? Who would forbid the gentle deed of charity? Who would wish to aggravate his perhaps awful account by withholding his hand? Who would willingly add this omission of what is right to his aggregate sum of what is wrong? Who would not even hope that it may prove a leading step to what is better? Who would not hope that, as good principles naturally tend to good actions, yet though it is reversing the usual order, for the stream to lead back to the fountain, yet who knows but the repetition of good actions may not only deter him from such as are bad, but may put his mind into such a frame as may lead him to examine the true principle of action, and thus to find, that though he has unhappily begun at the wrong end, that the right end is not even yet unattainable? Who can say that he may not be brought to examine his own heart, and be thus brought to the exercise of cordial prayer; by that he will be taught to know that 'if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.'

Our compassionate Redeemer cherished every hopeful appearance. When he saw some symptoms of goodness in the young Ruler 'He loved him.' But his amiableness was not religion. Though his obedience to the commandments was less defective than that of many a high professor; like others, who confidently trust in their own merit, he inquired not, it is to be feared, so much for improvement, as from a sense of conscious integrity and the hope of commendation—he inquired what was yet wanting to the perfection of his character.

He who knew all things, already knew that his love of money was greater than his love of God. Here he saw that this promising character was vulnerable. The one thing he wanted was more than the many things he possessed. He failed in the trial. He had some concern about his soul, but more about his money; 'he went away sorrowing,' because he could not secure the one without the sacrifice of the other.

This is, with *us*, as much a test of character now, as it was then. It is not until we see a man acting in direct opposition to his predominant sin that we can venture to hope that he is renewed in the spirit of his mind, that he is even got on right ground. Zaccheus, who probably set out worse than the ruler, obtained this grand victory which the other missed.

This promising young man, in proclaiming his obedience to the commands, did not, however, boast of his devotion; yet, in so moral a character, we cannot suppose that prayer was altogether neglected—but it must have been that prayer of which our Lord says 'this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, their heart is far from me.' Had it been sincere prayer, it would have been influential prayer. No slave to avarice *can* worship God in spirit and in truth, and it is such that the Father seeketh to worship him. While the heart remains unchanged, the temper unsanctified, and the life unfruitful, the prayer has not been 'the effectual fervent prayer which availeth much.'

But there is a third character, who, thinking both the others lately noticed to be wrong, is determined himself to be right. He divides the difference, and adopts half of the scheme of each. He approves of works, but doubts their unassisted efficacy to obtain salvation. He honours the Redeemer, and places confidence in His sacrifice; but it is not a full, entire, unmeasured confidence. He thinks the Saviour so far competent towards effecting part of his salvation that he cannot be saved without Him, but dares not trust Him with the whole. So, without intending to be profane, he enters into a kind of partnership with Him whose blood was made a full, perfect, and sufficient oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He pro-

poses to contribute his own share to a contract of his own making, trusting that, as the Saviour knows he is not perfect, He will graciously supply whatever is deficient in his services, and make up what is lacking to their perfection, he himself continuing to be the working partner.

But if he be a thinking and a feeling character, if he be sincere in his desire after divine truth, though ignorant of its true nature, he at length begins to find that the plan, which he once thought so admirably contrived, does not answer. He finds that his spiritual interests do not advance. He begins to discover that his faith is cold, even his work is sluggish, and its progress unsatisfactory. His exertions want the inspiring principle, they want a genuine faith. He begins to discover, that even his good actions, on which he had been accustomed to rest half his salvation, are exceeded by those persons who do more, and put no trust in them. He at length through the influence of divine grace, begins to discover, or rather to feel, that while one party is exclusively exalting faith and the other works, both seem to have forgotten, or rather not to have known, that there is a third, a heavenly principle, a sacred cement without which their separation might be eternal, and even their junction would be imperfect. This sacred principle is LOVE. He now knows, experimentally, that Christianity is a religion of the affections, a sentiment of the heart—that it demands and confers that charity without which faith is dead, and works are vain. It is that heavenly sentiment, the love of God in Christ shed abroad in the heart, without which he that liveth is counted dead—that principle, without which the gift of prophecy, of mysteries, and all knowledge are unavailing—without which, giving all the goods to the poor, and even the body to be burned, will not profit—it is that indestructible attribute, which, when prophecies shall fail, and tongues shall cease, and knowledge vanish away, will *never* fail—it is that perfect thing which shall subsist when 'that which is in part shall be done away.' Love will survive when faith shall become sight, and hope shall be fruition. It shall constitute our happiness when we shall know God 'even as we are known. We shall possess it in its plenitude, when we shall wake up after His likeness. For love, like every other holy disposition, is but an emanation of the perfections of God, a spark from the original flame, an assimilation to his nature; since God is love.

In faith there may be fear; in works there may be constraint; but the inspiring, invigorating, endearing principle of love, changes the fearful slave into the affectionate child; transforms *Him* whom he had degraded as a hard master into a tender father.—This love makes labour light, service freedom, dependence safety, duty delight, sufferings easy, obedience pleasure, submission choice. By the warmth with which he now cultivates this 'Unction from the Holy One,' he will be rendered more meet for that fulness of joy which is at His right-hand for evermore.

He has now completely found his own utter insufficiency for this great work. He is in the situation of the newly converted apostle, who had doubtless previously exercised a regular but formal devotion, but it never would have been said of him before—'behold he prayeth!' He begins with lowly prostration to besiege the throne of grace; he now prays with a fervour he never felt before. He goes on to feel, not only its necessity, but its efficacy; gradually acknowledges its transforming power, and in time becomes sensible that its consolations are neither few nor small.

He now sees objects with other eyes, the visual ray is purged; to his rectified optics—'trees are become men.' He now exclaims, 'not of works, lest any man should boast.' But though he has left off boasting, he is so far from having left off working, that he is far more active in good deeds than when he trusted they would carry him to heaven; superinduced humility has completely led him to the secrets of his own heart. He feels wants and desires of which he was never before sensible; and wants felt readily find a tongue, readily suggest unbidden prayer, unprompted praise. Prayer is become the very breath of his being; praise is so much his delight, that he almost forgets it is his duty. It is no longer his task, but his refreshment. What lately seemed a necessary drudgery, the severe injunction of a hard master, is now the pleasant service of an affectionate child.

He is deeply grieved at the time he has lost, but he is no less disposed to retrieve than to lament the past. He has found that the soul will not be saved where the heart is not renewed. Of that renewal, by the influence of the Divine Spirit, he is become more and more sensible in his devotional exercises. With a deeper sense of imperfection as he becomes less imperfect, he is yet sensible of new dispositions, of new energies, of a heart to trust, and a will to obey. He feels an increasing desire of conformity to his Divine Saviour, and such a growth in grace, that with him to will and to do is almost become the same thing.

All the faculties which God has given him are filled with the idea of God. He retains Him in his *memory* by the recollection of His mercies—he retains Him in his *understanding*, by meditating on His perfections. By this intelligent faculty he reflects on what God is in himself, in His word, and to his own soul. In his *will*, he loves God, and laments that he ever loved any thing in comparison of Him. Thus all his intellectual powers, voluntarily as it were, press into the worship of God, or, in the fewer and better words of the Psalmist, he summons them all to assist in his devotions, saying, 'Let all that is within me praise the Lord.'

Prayer.—The Condition of its Attendant Blessings.—Useless Contention about Terms.

MEN contend more about words than about things. A misunderstanding respecting them causes more disputes than the subjects of which they are the signs. In speaking, for instance, of the connexion between prescribed duties and promised blessings, are there not certain inoffensive and well-meaning words which seem

to have brought more reproach on those who use them than their harmless, if not legitimate character, may be thought to deserve. One of them, indeed, might expect more gentle treatment on the single ground that it is very frequently to be found in the Holy Scriptures.

The obnoxious terms to which we here allude are *rewards* and *conditions*. We have in general avoided the use of them, not for any harm discoverable in them when used and understood in the scriptural sense, but for fear of creating an idea contrary to what was intended to be conveyed. In the legal sense they are very exceptionable, for in the one case we deserve nothing from God, and in the other we can do nothing of *ourselves*.

We do not presume to make conditions with God, but He condescends to propose them to us. In this latter case, it is free grace imposes the reasonable condition: his free grace bestows the unmerited reward.—Are not all the promises of the Gospel conditional? The beatitudes include both the condition and the reward. Our blessed Saviour, in his sermon, multiplies, and individualizes his promises. He gives us a string of articles of blessedness and recompence; the specific recompence to the specific duty; amongst others, mercy to the merciful; the kingdom of heaven to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; the vision of God to the pure in heart.

The Holy Spirit consecrates the doctrine of *rewards*, by teaching the Apostle to connect it even with the very being of Omnipotence. 'God *is*,' and it immediately follows, that 'he is a *rewarder* of them that seek him.' Surely this is a condition, as much as the threat that he will punish those 'who know not God.' Every where, and particularly in the Psalms, prayer is made the condition of obtaining. In asking, seeking, and knocking, the condition and the reward most appropriately meet.

To those who come to the Redeemer, he has declared that 'they shall in no wise be cast out.' Their coming is the condition of their being accepted. 'Rest,' again, is the consoling promise which he makes to 'the heavy laden' who come to him. 'He that honoureth me I will honour,' is both a condition and a reward. What is the promise of pardon to repentance, but a condition? The negative denunciation is a condition. 'Ye will *not* come to me, that ye might have life.' 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord; without faith it is impossible to please God.' Do not these imply the blessings attending the contrary temper? State the question thus: Shall we be heard, if we do not pray? Shall we be pardoned, if we do not repent?

'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' It is the love of God then, which is the condition of obtaining those things which the heart of man cannot conceive.

All the promises made to faith are conditions, as are those made to holiness. The good and faithful servants who well employed their ten and five talents, were rewarded by having their talents doubled; the punishment of their unprofitable companion was a conditional punishment. He had made no use of what was committed to him.

Why is that bright variety of promises, 'to him that overcometh,' repeated with such unwearied iteration, in the sublime visions of the Saint at Patmos? What is it but a beautiful concatenation of conditions and rewards, closed with that joyful climax, 'he that overcometh shall be a pillar in the temple of the Lord, and shall go no more out.' If language more clear can be found, if assurance more explicit can be given, if promises more distinct can be produced, we confess we know not where to look for them. Did not Moses himself, the most disinterested of men, look to the recompence of the reward? And did not a greater than Moses, 'for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame?'

Promises like these were the support, and triumph of his immediate apostles, and of their remotest successors; of Ridley, and Latimer, and Cranmer. They will still be the consolation of the Christian sufferer for righteousness sake to the end of time.—Let us not then forfeit our inheritance by slighting the promise.

'This is a reward wholly of grace in respect of our deserving, but of justice, on account of the purchase of it by the sacred treasures of Christ's blood, and the unchangeable tenor of the Gospel wherein God promises heaven to all obedient and true believers.'

The things may be called by other names, but they amount to the same meaning.—There is a proud disinterestedness which would seem to intimate, that, because we deserve nothing we expect nothing. Our expectation, it is true, arises entirely from God's goodness, and not at all from our merit. It arises especially from his fidelity, which leads him to make good his own engagement. He has Himself said, 'faithful is He that has promised.'

This view of the subject deducts nothing from that free salvation purchased for us by the death of the Redeemer. We repeat, it deducts nothing from the sovereignty of God. All the promises are the gracious offers of an amnesty by an insulted King, who condescends to offer a treaty to his rebellious subjects. We deserve nothing at his hands. He owes us nothing. Punishment we do indeed deserve 'if He were extreme to mark what is done amiss;' yet he declares that punishment is his strange work. He has reversed the attainder, by the sacrifice of his Son. The attainted rebel, instead of disputing about the terms of reconciliation, instead of proposing terms of his own, thankfully accepts what the king offers. Though our pardon hangs on a firm belief in the great truths he has revealed, let us not so explain these as to hazard or neglect the duties he has enjoined us to perform. If our faith, though sincere, is often weak, let us remember, that our obedience is even more imperfect than our faith; and let us, by fervent and unremitting prayer, labour at once to build up our faith which is weak, and to perfect our obedience which is defective.

God not only pardons as a merciful king, He enacts laws as a wise legislator; still the old revolutionary principles are continually

breaking out; to check which the sovereign proposes *terms* as proofs of our allegiance.—He does by no means annex salvation to them, but he requires them as marks of our repentance, as confirmation of our loyalty. He requires them as evidences, both of our faith and of our submission. By the infusion of a new spirit of life consequent on His pardon, the acquitted rebel adopts a new set of principles which show themselves by overt acts, suggested and nourished by fervent prayer.

We are aware that the term 'evidences' used above, is to many no less revolting, than those which we have previously noticed, but by this excessive affectation of disinterestedness and refining on the promises, we shall come to do away all moral obligation, we shall attenuate the substantial realities of Christianity into a meagre theory, reduce the fruitful principle of practical religion, to a dry and unproductive speculation, a barren thing to which nothing that is perceptible, palpable, tangible, and practical, is necessarily appended.

On the other hand, it is but too notorious, that the terms here humbly attempted to be vindicated and restored to their true signification, are too frequently made the sum and substance, the whole of religion, till the spirituality of the Gospel, and the great peculiarities of the religion of Jesus, are smothered in the heap of frigid human ethics.

It is by the promises annexed to these conditions, that the Christian is gradually brought to consider prayer not merely as a duty, but to value it as a privilege; and the more earnestly he cultivates the spirit of supplication, the more deeply will it enable him to penetrate into the recesses of his own heart. The more he discovers the evils which he there finds, he will be so far from being deterred by the discovery, from approaching to the fountain of mercy, that it will lead him to be more diligent as well as more fervent, in his application there. Nothing so favourably discovers to us our spiritual exigencies, nothing can quicken our petitions for their relief so powerfully, as the conviction of their actual existence.—In this full conviction, in this earnest application, the Christian at length feels the efficacy of prayer in its consolations, its blessedness, in its transforming power.

Vain Excuses for the Neglect of Prayer.—The Man of Business.—Case of Nehemiah.—Prayer against the Fear of Death.—Characters to whom this Prayer is recommended.

THERE are not a few, who offer apologies for the neglect of spiritual duties, by saying they believe them to be right, but that they are tempted from the exercise of them by idleness, or business, by company, or pleasure. This may be true, but temptations are not compulsions. The great adversary of souls may fill the fancy with alluring images of enjoyment, so as to draw us away from any duty, but it is in our own choice to indulge, and through grace to repel them. He may act upon the passions through outward objects, which introduce them to the mind through the senses, but the grace of God enables all who faithfully ask it, to withstand them.

If we were not at liberty to reject temptation, sin would be no sin. It is the offer of the grace of resistance not used, which makes the offender to be without excuse. All the motives and allurements to sin would be ineffectual, would we keep up in our minds what are its 'wages'—death; death spiritual, death eternal!

Of all the excuses for the neglect of prayer, the man of business justifies his omission to himself by the most plausible apologies.—Many of this class, active for themselves, and useful to the world, are far from disputing either the propriety, or the duty of prayer; they are willing however for the present, to turn over this duty to the clergy, to the idle, to women and children. They allow it to be an important thing, but not the most important. They acknowledge, if men have time to spare, they cannot spend it better; but *they* have no time. It is indeed a duty, but a duty not to be compared with that of the court, the bar, the public office, the counting-house, or the shop.

Now, in pleading for the importance of the one, we should be the last to detract from that of the other. We only plead for their entire compatability.

We pass over the instance of Daniel, a man of business and a statesman, and of many other public characters, recorded in Scripture, and confine ourselves to the example of Nehemiah. He was not only an officer in the court of the greatest king of the East, but it was his duty to be much in the royal presence. He was on a particular occasion, under deep affliction; for Jerusalem was in ruins! On a certain day his sadness was so great, as to be visible to the king, at whose table he was attending.

The monarch enquired the cause of his sorrow, and what request he had to make.—He instantly 'prayed to the God of heaven,' doubtless to strengthen him, and then made his petition to the king for no less a boon, than to allow him to rebuild the walls of the sacred city. His prayer preceded his request. It was that prayer, which gave him courage to present that petition, and which perhaps induced the sovereign to grant it. What a double encouragement is here given to the courtier, both to pray to God, and to speak truth to a king!

Though the plea of the man of business, for his own particular exemption, can by no means be granted, yet it is the sense he entertains of the value of his professional duties, which deceives him. It leads him to believe, that there can be no evil in substituting business for devotion. He is conscious that he is industrious, and he knows that industry is a great moral quality. He is rightly persuaded, that the man of pleasure has no such plea to produce. He therefore imposes on himself, with the belief that there *can* be no harm in substituting a moral for a religious exercise; for he has learned to think highly of morality, while he assigns to religion only an inferior degree in his scale of duties.

He usually goes to church once on the Sunday; but it does not at all infringe on his religious system to examine his accounts, to give

a great dinner, or to begin a journey on that day.

Now it is a serious truth, that there is no man to whom prayer is more imperatively a duty, or more obviously a necessity, than to the man of business; whether in the higher or the middle classes of society. There is no man who more stands in need of quieting his anxities, regulating his tempers, cooling his spirits by a devout application for the blessing of God; none to whom it is more necessary to implore the divine protection for the duties, or preservation from the dangers of the scene in which he is about to engage; none to whom it is more important to solicit direction in the difficulties which the day may produce; none on whom it is more incumbent to solicit support against the temptations which may be about to assail him; none to whom the petition for an enlightened conscience, an upright intention, a sound probity, and an undeviating sincerity, is of more importance.

What is so likely as prayer to enable him to stand prepared to meet the accidental fluctuations in his affairs, to receive without inebriation, a sudden flow of prosperous fortune, or to sustain any adverse circumstance with resignation?

Even persons in more retired situations, even those who have made considerable advances in religion cannot but acknowledge how much the ordinary and necessary cares of daily life, especially, how much any unexpected accession to them, are likely to cause absence and distraction in their devotions:—how much then ought they, whose whole life is business, to be on their guard against these dangers, to double their vigilance against them, and to implore direction under them.

Were the Christian soldier accustomed never to engage in the moral battle of daily life, without putting on this panoply, the shafts of temptation would strike with a feeble and erring blow; they would not so deeply pierce the guarded heart. And were fervent humble daily prayer once conscientiously adopted, its effects would reach beyond the week-day engagements. It would gradually extend its benign influence to the postponing of settling accounts, the festive dinner, and the not absolutely necessary journey, to one of those six days in which we are enjoined to labour. It would lead him to the habit of doing 'no manner of work' on that day, in which the doing of it was prohibited by the great Lawgiver in his own person.

We have more than once alluded to the diversities of character, occasional events, difference in the state of mind as well as of circumstances, which may not only render the prayer which is suitable to one man unsuitable to another, but unsuitable to the same man under every alteration of circumstances.

But among the proper topics for prayer, there is one which, being of universal interest ought not to be omitted. For by whatever dissimilarity of character, capacity, profession, station, or temper, the condition of man, and, of course, the nature of prayer, is diversified—there is one grand point of union, one circumstance, one condition, in which they must all meet; one state, of which every man is equally certain; one event which happeneth to all,—'it is appointed unto every man once to die.' The rugged road of sorrow, the flowery path of pleasure, as well as

'The paths of glory, lead but to the grave.'

In praying, therefore, against the fear of death, we do not pray against a contingent but a certain evil; we pray to be delivered from the overwhelming dread of that house which is appointed for all living—we are put in mind that all who are born must die!

'The end of all things is at hand.' To what purpose does the apostle convert this awful proclamation? Does he use it to encourage gloomy tempers, to invite to unprofitable melancholy? No: he uses the solemn admonition to stir us up to moral goodness—therefore, 'be sober'—he does more, he uses it to excite us to religious vigilance;—'and watch unto prayer.'

Some men, and they are not the best men, talk boldly of death, especially while they suppose it to be at a distance; but this boastful heroism is a very equivocal symptom of their being in a proper state to meet it. Others of a less confident, but not more serious cast of mind, take pains to keep it as far as possible from their thoughts, lest the indulging such gloomy reflections should make them uneasy, and embitter their present enjoyments. They banish it, indeed, from their thoughts, as they do other unpleasant subjects; but it is no proof that we do not fear a thing, because we manage to keep it out of sight; on the contrary, the effort betrays the very fear which it denies.

There is an inconsistency in the character of man, so preposterous, that we should not believe it, if we did not feel as well as see it. We continue eagerly to catch at the things which are always sliding from us, and which no grasp of ours can retain, whilst we forget the things that are not only hastening to meet us, but which will remain with us, not through time only, but eternity.

Others are afraid to think of death for the same reason, that they are afraid to make their will, lest it should bring it nearer: but we know that we will keep up the remembrance without accelerating the approach; familiarity with the thought is the best means of conquering the fear. It is not pusillanimity, but prudence, so to fear death as to fear to meet it in an unprepared state of mind; and that fear will always be safe and salutary, which leads to the preparation.

Prayer against the fear of death, by keeping up in us a constant remembrance of our mortality, will help to wean us from a too intimate attachment to the things we are so soon to quit. By this habitual preparation to meet our Judge, we shall be brought to pray more earnestly for an interest in the great Intercessor; and to strive more effectually against every offence which may aggravate the awfulness of that meeting.—Above all, such a prayer will more emphatically remind us that it was sin which brought death into the world, which introduces that original principle and first act of sin, from which all our natural evil, and practical offences are derived.

But let us not be accustomed to think of death

as a detached and separate object, as the mere insulated circumstance of its closing our eyes for ever on all we have been accustomed to cherish; let us not think of it only as a consignment to the narrow chambers of the tomb, but let us ever connect with the idea of death, the consoling assurance that to the real Christian, its sting is drawn out; this will fill the heart with boundless love and endless gratitude to Him who has extracted it. This thought of death, though it will keep up in the mind the anticipation of that night, which as to this world shall know no morning, will also keep up the glorious prospect of that eternal day which shall know no night.

Fervent prayer, that divine grace may prepare us for death, will, if cordially adopted, answer many great moral purposes. It will remind every individual of every class that 'the time is short'—that 'there is no repentance in the grave.'

To the *man of opulence*, who heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them, prayer will be a constant memento: it will remind him that he walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; it will remind him of laying up treasures where thieves cannot enter, nor rust corrode.

The habit of praying against the fear of death, would check the pride of youthful *beauty*, by reminding her how soon it must say to the worm, Thou art my father, and to corruption, Thou art my mother and sister.

The *man of genius*, he who thought that of making many books there would be no end; who, in his zeal to write, had neglected to pray; who had thought little of any immortality but that which was to be conferred by the applause of dying creatures like himself; who, in the vanity of possessing talents, had forgotten that he must one day account for the application of them; if happily he should be brought to see the evil of his own heart, to feel the wants of his own soul, how intense will be his repentance, that he had loved the praise of men more than the praise of God! how fervently will he pray that his mercies may not aggravate the account of his sins; that his talents may not become the instrument of his punishment! How earnestly will he supplicate pardon, how devoutly will he 'give glory to God, before his feet stumble on the dark mountains!'

The *man of business*, to whom we have already adverted, who thought his schemes so deeply laid, his speculations so prudently planned, that nothing could frustrate them; who calculated that the future was as much in his power as the present, forgot that death, that grand subverter of projects, might interpose his *veto*. This man, who could not find time to pray, must find time to die—he may at length find—happy if he ever find it, that he cannot meet his end with a peaceful heart, and a resigned spirit, without the preparation of prayer for support in that awful period, 'when his purposes shall be broken off and all his thoughts perish.'

The *man of pleasure*, alas! what shall we say for *him*? He is sunk to the lowest step of degradation in the moral scale; he has not even human supports; he has robbed himself even of the ordinary consolations resorted to by ordinary men. He has no stay on which to lay hold, no twig at which to catch, no pretence by which to flatter himself into a false peace; no recollection of past usefulness; he has neither served his country; nor benefitted society—what shall we say for him? If he pray not for himself, we must pray for him—with God all things are possible.

The *patriot*, indefatigable in the public service, distinguished for integrity; but neglecting the offices of Christianity; whose lofty character power had not warped, nor cupidity debased, but whose religious principles, though they had never been renounced, had not been kept in exercise; a spirit of rare disinterestedness; a moralist of unblanched honour, but who pleaded that duty had left him little time for devotion! Should divine grace incline him at last to seek God, should he begin to pray to be prepared for death and judgment, he will deeply regret with the contrite cardinal, not that he served his king faithfully, but that his higher services had not been devoted to their highest object. In this frame of mind, that ambition which was satisfied with what earth could give, or kings reward, will appear no longer glorious in his eyes. True and just to his king, devoted to his country, faithful to all but his God and himself, he now laments that he had neglected to seek a better country, neglected to serve the King Eternal, the blessed and only Potentate; neglected to obtain an interest in a kingdom which shall not be moved. He feels that mere patriotism, grand as is its object, and important as is its end, will not afford support to a soul sinking at the approach of the inevitable hour, at the view of final judgment.

The *hero*, who, in the hot engagement, surrounded with the 'pride, pomp, and circumstance of war,' bravely defied death; forgot all that was personal, and only remembered—nobly remembered, his country, and his immediate duty;—animated with the glory that was to be acquired with his arm, and almost ready to exclaim with the Roman patriot;

'——————What pity
That we can die but once to serve our country!'

yet this hero, if he had ever made a conscience of prayer, may he not hereafter find, that the most successful instrumentality is a distinct thing in itself, and will be different in its results, from personal piety? May he not find that, though he saved others, himself he cannot save?

If, however, in after-life, in the cool shade of honourable retirement, he be brought through the grace of God, to habituate himself to earnest prayer, he will deeply regret that he never entered the field of battle without imploring the favour of the God of battles; that he had ever returned alive from slaughtered squadrons, without adoring the Author of his providential preservation. If his penitence be sincere, his prayer will be effectual. It will fortify him under the mere depressing prospect of that death which is soon to be encountered in the solitude of his darkened chamber, without witnesses, without glory, without the cheering band, without the

spirit-stirring drum; without the tumultuous acclamation; with no objects to distract his attention; no conflicting concerns to divide his thoughts; no human arm, either of others or his own, on which to depend. This timely reflection, this late, though never *too* late prayer, may still prepare him for a peaceful dying-bed; may lead him to lean on a stronger arm than his own, or that of an army; may conduct him to a victory over his last enemy, and thus dispose him to meet death in a safer state than when he despised it in the field, may bring him to acknowledge, that while he continued to live without subjection to the Captain of his salvation, though he had fought bravely, he had not yet fought the good fight.

The Consolations of Prayer—Its Perpetual Obligation.

In addition to what has already been observed, as to convenient seasons for prayer, we cannot but remark, that many Christians have been enabled to convert their trials into blessings, by gradually bringing themselves to devote the hours of wakeful and even painful nights to devout meditation and prayer. By doing at first some violence to their inclinations, they have afterwards found in it both profit and pleasure. The night has been made to them a season of heart-searching thought and spiritual consolation. Solitude and stillness completely shut out the world; its business, its cares, its impertinences. The mind is sobered, the passions are stilled, it seems to the watchful Christian as if there were in the universe only God and his own soul. It is an inexpressible consolation to him to feel that the one Being in the universe, who never slumbereth nor sleepeth, is the very Being to whom he has free access, even in the most unseasonable hours. The faculties of the mind may not, perhaps, be in their highest exercise, but the affections of the heart, from the exclusion of distracting objects, more readily ascend to their noblest object. Night and darkness are no parasites: conscience is more easily alarmed. It puts on fewer disguises. We appear to ourselves more what we really are. This detection is salutary. The glare which the cheerful day-light, business, pleasure and company, had shed over all objects, is withdrawn. Schemes which, in the day had appeared plausible, now present objections. What had then appeared safe, now, at least, seems to require deliberation. This silent season of self-examination, is a keen detector of any latent evil, which, like the fly in the box of perfume, may corrupt much that is pure.

When this communion with God can be maintained, it supplies deficiencies of devotion to those who have little leisure during the day; and, by thus rescuing these otherwise lost hours, it snatches time from oblivion, at once adds to the length of life, and weans from the love of it.

If the wearied and restless body be tempted to exclaim 'would God it were morning,' the very term suggests the most consoling of all images. The quick mind shoots forward beyond this vale of tears, beyond the dark valley of the shadow of death; it stretches onward to the joyful morning of the Resurrection; it anticipates that blessed state where there is no more weeping and no more night—no weeping, for God's own hand shall wipe away the tears; no night, for the Lamb himself shall be the light.

If disqualifying pain, or distressing languor, prevent the utterance of supplication, patience is itself a prayer, and a prayer which will not fail to be heard. We have a striking instance of an answer to silent prayer, in the case of Moses. In a situation of extreme distress, when he had not uttered a word, 'the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy crying.'

The tender mercy of our compassionate Father will make sense, and find meaning in a prayer which is almost unintelligible to the languid sufferer who offers it. God wants not to be informed, he wants only to be remembered, to be loved, to be sought.

If, however, in the conduct of this nightly watching, and this nightly prayer, your own stock of thought or expression is absolutely deficient, prophets and apostles will not only afford you the most encouraging examples, but most perfect assistance. More especially the royal treasury of king David lies open to you; and whatever are your wants, there your resources are inexhaustible.

What joyful appeals does the psalmist make to Him to whom the darkness and the light are both alike! 'Have I not remembered Thee in my bed, and thought upon thee when I was waking?' 'In the night,' he again exclaims, 'I commune with my own heart, and search out my spirit.' And of this holy practice was he so little weary, that he resolved to persevere in it. 'As long as I live will I magnify Thee in this manner.' Similar to this is the apostrophe of the evangelical prophet—'With my soul have I desired Thee in the night.'

The Psalms of David exhibit the finest specimen of experimental religion in the world. They are attended with this singular advantage and this unspeakable comfort, that in them God speaks to us and we speak to Him. This delightful interlocution between the King of saints and the penitent sinner; this interchange of character, this mixture of prayer and promise, of help implored and grace bestowed, of weakness pleaded and strength imparted, of favour shown and gratitude returned, of prostration on one part and encouragement on the other, of abounding sorrow, and overflowing mercy, this beautiful variety of affecting intercourse between sinful dust and infinite goodness, lifts the abased penitent into the closest and most elevating communion with his Saviour and his God.

Yet, inestimable as are the Psalms of David, in every point of view, and especially for the purpose here recommended, as a refuge for the suffering body, the wakeful mind, the praying spirit, and the oppressed heart—that very sanctity, and depth of devotional feeling, which is their life-blood, may lead to a dangerous misapplication in the mouth of the irreligious. Holy expressions in prayer, and ebullitions of grateful praise, are more easily committed to the memo-

ry, than impressed upon the heart. And is there not some danger, that not only the mere formalist, but even the immoral man may apply to himself sentiments, declarations, assurances, and comforts, which can only belong to the real Christian? For instance; the arrogant man, as if, like the dervise in the Persian fable, he had shot his soul into the character he assumes, repeats with complete self-application, 'Lord, I am not high-minded;' the trifler says, 'I hate vain thoughts;' the irreligious, 'Lord how I love thy law.' He who seldom prays at all, confidently repeats, 'All the day long I am occupied in thy statutes.' The covetous, in the words of Paul or David, with as much self-complacency deprecates avarice, as if the anathema against it had ever opened either his heart or his purse.

On the other hand, as the hardest substances, by continual attrition, are at length penetrated, it is the pleasing task of charity to hope, that the habitual repetition of such feelings, sentiments, and principles may sink into the hard heart, may lead its possessor to look into himself, to compare what he feels with what he reads, and by discovering the discrepancy between his life and his prayers, may open his eyes on his own danger, till by the grace of God the holy vehicle of his hypocrisy may be made that of his conversion.

Perhaps you are a doubting, weak, and trembling penitent; not indeed doubting of the mercies of God, but of your own interest in them. This feeling may arise from a deep and humbling sense of your own sins and infirmities, rather than from any criminal unbelief. Here comes in to your relief a whole host of gracious promises, peculiarly adapted to your case. The tender images of 'the smoking flax,' and 'the bruised reed,' the promised acceptance of 'the contrite spirit, and the broken heart.' But beyond all praise is the consoling assurance of our great High Priest, that 'he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.' Touched with them, not only when he was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' but now when he is even 'ascended to the glory which he had with his Father before the world began.'

How soothing is this expression of the Divine compassion! It is not barely the hearing or the seeing, it is the *feeling* of our infirmities. He was in all points tempted like as we are This is the most exquisite touch of sympathy; he not only suffered but was tempted; here indeed the resemblance has its limitation: for he was without sin. He knew the condition of 'being tempted,' but not that of yielding to it. It is this feeling of being tempted, which gives him such an intimate concern in the feeble fearful Christian. He sends the angel of his presence, and saves them. What a striking confirmation of the blessed truth, that in all our afflictions he is afflicted, is the awful interrogation, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou,'—not my church, but '*me*?'

It is a further encouragement to the dejected spirit, that the Almighty was not contented to show his willingness to pardon by single declarations, however strong and full. He has heaped up words, he has crowded images, he has accumulated expressions, he has exhausted language, by all the variety of synonymes which express love, mercy, pardon, and acceptance. They are graciously crowded together, that the trembling mourner who was not sufficiently assured by one, might be encouraged by another. And it is the consummation of the Divine goodness that this message is not sent by his ambassador, but that the King of kings, the blessed and only Potentate, condescends himself to pronounce this royal proclamation, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin!' Forgiving indeed, but in consonance with his just demand of repentance and reformation, 'who will by no means clear the guilty.'

The ardent and affectionate Apostle of the Gentiles, within a very few verses, has also represented the Almighty under every character that is endearing and consoling. He denominates him 'the God of patience and of comfort,' 'the God of hope and of peace;' titles which are peculiarly addressed to all the exigencies of man, and graciously expressive of God's will and power to supply them. There is an appropriation of the terms to the state of the fallen children of mortality, calculated to take away all fear, and to fill the vacant room with love, and peace, and gratitude unspeakable.

Refuse not then to take comfort from the promises of God, when perhaps you are easily satisfied with the assurance of pardon from a frail and sinful creature like yourself whom you had offended. Why is God the only being who is not believed? who is not trusted? O thou that hearest prayer, why unto Thee will not all flesh come?

But though God's pardoning grace knows no bounds, his sanctifying grace is given by measure, is given as we use what we have already received. God seems to reserve in his own hands a provision for our humility, and thus keeps prayer in full exercise. The one is progressive in its operation, the other is full and free, bestowed, not for any righteousness in the receiver, but for that full and perfect oblation once made for sin. Is it not a most fallacious trust to expect that our sins will be blotted out without that habitual repentance annexed to the promise? It is vain to offer the bribe of burnt offerings, the thousands of rams, or the rivers of oil. God desires not to be paid for our pardon, nor profited by our offerings. He never sells his favours. The riches of the universe, which are indeed already his, could not procure the pardon of a single sinner, but he prescribes the duty, when he promises the pardon. 'Repent, that your sins may be blotted out.'

It would therefore supply ample matter for habitual prayer, had we only the sins of our nature to lament; but when to these we add our practical offences, oh, how great is the sum of them! Yet though they are more than we can express, they are not greater than God can forgive; not more than the blood which was shed for them can wash out.

But he to whom the duty of prayer is unknown, and by whom the privilege of prayer is unfelt, or he by whom it is neglected, or he who

uses it for form and not from feeling, may probably say, Will this work, wearisome even if necessary, never know an end? Will there be no period when God will dispense with its regular exercise? Will there never be such an attainment of the end proposed, as that we may be allowed to discontinue the means?

To these interrogatories there is but one answer, an answer which shall be also made, by an appeal to the enquirer himself.

If there is any day in which we are quite certain that we shall meet with no trial from Providence, no temptation from the world, any day in which we shall be sure to have no wrong tempers excited in ourselves, no call to bear with those of others, no misfortune to encounter, and no need of Divine assistance to endure it, on that morning we may safely omit our prayer.

If there is any evening in which we have received no protection from God, and experienced no mercy at his hands; if we have not lost a single opportunity of doing or receiving good, if we are quite certain that we have not once spoken unadvisedly with our lips, nor entertained one vain or idle thought in our heart, on that night we may safely omit praise to God, and the confession of our own sinfulness, on that night we may safely omit humiliation and thanksgiving. To repeat the converse would be superfluous.

When we can conscientiously say, that religion has given a tone to our conduct, a law to our actions, a rule to our thoughts, a bridle to our tongue, a restraint to every wrong passion, a check to every evil temper, then, some will say, we may safely be dismissed from the drudgery of prayer, it will then have answered all the end which you so tiresomely recommend. So far from it, we really figure to ourselves, that if we could hope to hear of a being brought to such perfection of discipline, it would unquestionably be found that this would be the very being who would continue most perseveringly in the practice of that devotion, which had so materially contributed to bring his heart and mind into so desirable a state, who would most tremble to discontinue prayer, who would be most appalled at the thought of the condition into which such discontinuance would be likely to reduce him. Whatever others do, he will continue forever to 'sing praises unto Thee, O Thou most Highest; he will continue to tell of Thy loving kindness early in the morning, and of Thy truth in the night season.'

It is true that while he considered religion as something nominal and ceremonial, rather than as a principle of spirit and of life, he felt nothing encouraging, nothing refreshing, nothing delightful in prayer. But since he began to feel it as the means of procuring the most substantial blessings to his heart; since he began to experience something of the realization of the promises to his soul, in the performance of this exercise, he finds there is no employment so satisfactory, none that his mind can so little do without; none that so effectually raises him above the world, none that so opens his eyes to its empty shadows, none which can make him look with so much indifference on its lying vanities; none that can so powerfully defend him against the assaults of temptation, and the allurements of pleasure, none that can so sustain him under labour, so carry him through difficulties; none that can so quicken him in the practice of every virtue, and animate him in the discharge of every duty.

But if prayer be so exhilirating to the soul, what shall be said of praise? Praise is the only employment, we had almost said, it is the only duty, in which self finds no part. In praise we go out of ourselves, and think only of Him to whom we offer it. It is the most purely disinterested of all services. It is gratitude without solicitation, acknowledgment without petition. Prayer is the overflowing expression of our wants, praise of our affections. Prayer is the language of the destitute, praise of the redeemed, sinner. If the angelic spirits offer their praises exempt from our mixture of infirmity or alloy, yet we have a motive for gratitude, unknown even to the angels. They are unfallen beings; they cannot say as we can, 'Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us.'—Prayer is prospective. Praise takes in, in its wide range, enjoyment of present, remembrance of past, and anticipation of future blessings. Prayer points the only way to heaven, 'praise is already there.'

On Intercessory Prayer.

The social affections were given us not only for the kindliest, but the noblest purposes. The charities of father, son, and brother, were bestowed, not only to make life pleasant, but to make it useful; not only that we might contribute to the present comfort, but to the eternal benefit of each other.

These heaven-implanted affections are never brought into exercise more properly, nor with more lively feelings, than in intercessory prayer. Our friends may have wants which we cannot remove, desires which we cannot gratify, afflictions which we cannot relieve, but is always in our power to bring them before God; to pray for them whenever we pray for ourselves. This, as it is a most pleasant and easy, so it is an indispensable obligation. It is a duty which brings the social affections into their highest exercise, and which may be reciprocally paid and received.

The same Scriptures which expressly enjoin that supplication, prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks be made for all men, furnish also numerous examples of the efficacy of intercessory prayer. We need not dwell on the instance of the rain obtained by the prayers of Elijah, or the earlier availing intercessions of Moses, with other public deliverances effected in the same manner.

Though the perseverance of Abraham's prayer did not prevent the extermination of the polluted city, yet doubtless the blessing he solicited for it returned unto his own bosom, and the successive promises made by the prayers of Judge to the successively reduced number of the righteous, for whose sake the petition for preservation was offered, afford a proof of the Divine appro-

bation and a striking encouragement to persist in the duty of intercessory prayer. The promise of God was not withdrawn. The prayer was conditional, and could the petitioner have made up his very lowest compliment, the city had been saved. The interceding heart in any event is sure to gain something for itself.

Prayer is such an enlarger of the affections, such an opener of the heart, that we cannot but wonder how any who live in the practice of it, should be penurious in their alms; or, if they do give, should do it 'grudgingly or of necessity.' Surely if our prayer be cordial, we shall be more ready to assist as well as to love those for whom we are in the habit of making supplication to God. It is impossible to pray sincerely for the well-being of others, without being desirous of contributing to it. We can hardly conceive a more complete species of self-deception than that practised by an avaricious professor of religion, one who goes on mechanically to pray for the poor, whilst his prayer has neither opened his heart nor his purse. He may value himself on this, as on other instances of his ingenuity, in having found out so cheap a way of doing good, and go on contentedly, till he hear those tremendous words of exclusion, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.'

There is a generosity in religion. The same principle which disposes a Christian to contribute to the temporal interests of those he loves, inclines him to breathe his earnest supplication for their spiritual benefit. Not only does prayers for others promote natural affection, not only does it soften the heart of him who intercedes, but it is hoped that they for whom the intercession is made, may reap the benefit.

But our intercessions must neither dwell in generalities for the public nor in limitations to the wants of our particular friends.

The Christian is the friend of every description of the children of mortality. In the fulness of our compassion for the miseries of mankind, we pour out our hearts in prayer for the poor and destitute, and we do well. But there is another and a large class who are still more objects of our pity, and consequently should be of our prayer. We pray for those who have no portion in this world, but do we not sometimes forget to pray for those who have their whole portion in it? We pray for the praying servants of God, but perhaps we neglect to pray for those who never pray for themselves. These are the persons who stand most in need of the mercy of the Almighty, and of our Christian importunity in their favour.

Is it not affecting, that even into our devotions we are disposed to carry the regard we too highly indulge of the good things of this life, by earnestly imploring mercy upon those who want them; and by forgetting to offer our supplications in favour of those who are blinded by the too full enjoyment of them. If the one duty be done, should the other be left undone?

Happily we live in an age presenting many instances, where neither high station, nor great riches impede piety, or obstruct devotion. Yet, it is to be feared, that the general tendency of rank, and especially of riches, is to withdraw the heart from spiritual exercises, more than the hand from pecuniary bounty.

Let us then fervently include among the objects of our supplication that very pitiable and very necessitous class among the rich and great, if such a class there be, who live without any sensible feeling of the presence of God as acknowledged in prayer:—for those persons who never entertain a doubt of their own deserts, even if they do not deny Him who is the giver of the boundless blessings which lead them to forget Him.—Strange! that the very overflowing cup which ought to ensure gratitude should induce forgetfulness! strange! that prayer to God should be neglected in proportion to the magnitude of His bounties.

May the writer be permitted to enrich the penury of her own meagre composition with a beautiful extract from one whose unequalled rhetoric was always warmed by a deep sensibility, and occasionally tinctured with religious feeling—the eloquent and almost prophetic author of Reflections on the Revolution in France:—

'The English people are satisfied, that to the great, the consolations of religion are as necessary as its instructions. They too are among the unhappy. They feel personal pain and domestic sorrow. In these they have no privilege, but are subject to pay their full contingent to the contributions levied on mortality. They want this sovereign balm under their gnawing cares and anxieties, which being less conversant about the limited wants of animal life, range without limit, and are diversified by infinite combinations in the wild and unbounded regions of imagination. Some charitable dole is wanting to these our often very unhappy brethren, to fill the gloomy void that reigns in minds which have nothing on earth to hope or fear; something to relieve in the killing langour and overlaboured lassitude of those who have nothing to do; something to excite an appetite to existence in the palled satiety which attends on all pleasures which may be bought, where nature is not left to her own process, where even desire is anticipated, and therefore, fruition defeated by meditated schemes and contrivances of delight; and no interval, no obstacle, is interposed between the wish and the accomplishment.'

O you great ones of the earth, whom riches ensnare and prosperity betrays—be largely liberal, even from self-interest. Not, indeed, expecting to make the liberality you bestow a remuneration for the devotions you withhold. Scatter your superfluities, and more than your superfluities, to the destitute, if not to vindicate Providence, yet to benefit yourselves. Not, indeed, to revive the old pious fraud of depending for salvation on the prayers of others; yet still you may hope to be repaid, with usurious interest, from the pious poor, by the very tender charity of their prayers for you. Their supplications may possibly be so heard, that you may at length, be brought to the indispensable necessity, and the bounden duty of praying for yourselves.

As to the commanding duty of praying for our enemies, the most powerful example bequeathed to us in Scripture, next to that of his Divine master on the cross, is that of St. Stephen.

Even *after* the expiring martyr had ejaculated 'Lord Jesus receive my spirit,' he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice 'Lord lay not this sin to their charge.' Let every instance of Roman greatness of mind, let every story of Grecian magnanimity be ransacked, and produce, who can, such another example. Theirs is tumour, this is grandeur; their is heroism, this is Christianity; *they* died for their country, Jesus for his enemies; *they* implored the gods for themselves, Stephen for his murderers.

The praying Christian in the World.—The Promise of Rest to the Christian.

As the keeping up a due sense of religion, both in faith and practice, so materially depends on the habit of fervent and heart-felt devotion, may we be permitted, in this place, to insist on the probable effects which would follow the devout and conscientious exercise of prayer, rather than on prayer itself?

As soon as religion is really become the earnest desire of our hearts, it will inevitably become the great business of our lives; the one is the only satisfactory evidence of the other: consequently the religion of the heart and life will promote that prayer by which both have been promoted.

They, therefore, little advance the true interest of mankind, who, under the powerful plea of what great things God has done for us in our redemption by His Son, neglect to encourage our active services in His cause. Hear the words of inspiration, 'Be not slothful;' 'run the race;' 'fight the good fight;' 'strive to enter in;' give diligence;' 'work out your own salvation;' 'God is not unmindful to forget your labour of love;' 'but when ye have done all, say, Ye are unprofitable servants, ye have done that which was your duty to do.'

But if, after we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, what shall we be if we have done nothing? Is it not obvious that the Holy Spirit, who dictated these exhortations, clearly meant that a sound faith in the word of God was meant to produce holy exertion in his cause? The activity in doing good of the Son of God was not exceeded by his devotion, and both gloriously illustrated his doctrines, and confirmed his divinity. Until we make then our religion a part of our common life, until we bring Christianity, as an illustrious genius is said to have brought philosophy, from its retreat to live in the world, and dwell among men; until we have brought it from the closet to the active scene, from the church to the world, whether that world be the court, the senate, the exchange, the public office, the private counting-house, the courts of justice, the professional departments, or the domestic drawing-room, it will not have fully accomplished what it was sent on earth to do.

We do not mean the introduction of its language, but of its spirit: the former is frequently as incompatible with public, as it is unsuitable to private business; but the latter is of universal application. We mean that the temper and dispositions which it is the object of prayer to communicate, should be kept alive in society, and brought into action in its affairs. That the integrity, the veracity, the justice, the purity, the liberality, the watchfulness over ourselves, the candour towards others, all exercised in the fear of the Lord, and strengthened by the word of God and prayer, should be brought from the retirement of devotion to the regulation of the conduct.

Though we have observed above, that it is rather the spirit than the language of religion that should be carried into business, yet we cannot forbear regretting, that we seem to decline much from the sober usages of our ancestors. Formerly testamentary instruments were never made the mere conveyance of worldly possessions. They were also made the vehicles of pious sentiments, and always at least opened with a devout offering of the soul to Him who gave it. Indeed it is difficult to imagine how a man *can* write the words *my last will* without a solemn reflection on that *last act* which must inevitably follow it, and in view of which act he is making it. May not this alteration in the practice be partly ascribed to the decline of habitual prayer.*

But what fair opportunities have certain of the great officers of the law, especially in their *charges*, of giving to them a solemnity the most impressive, by adverting more frequently to the awful truths of Christianity! Even if such awakening appeals to the conscience should fail of their effects on the unhappy convicts to whom they are addressed, they may be of incalculable benefit to some of the numerous persons present. A counsel, a caution, a reproof, and exhortation, all on pure Christian principles, and thus coming from a profession to which it appears not immediately to belong, may especially from not being expected, produce consequences the most salutary. The terribly affecting circumstances of the moment, the appalling scene so soon to follow, must give an unspeakable weight to the most touching admonition. He who is judging the condemned violator of divine and human laws, stands as a kind of representative of the future Judge of quick and dead and will himself soon be judged by

* I beg leave to strengthen my own sentiments on this head, by quoting a passage from an eminent and truly pious barrister, with an extract from the last will of one of the greatest men of our age.

'Of late years, it has been the fashion (for there is a fashion even in the last act of a man's life) to omit these solemn preambles. I confess myself an approver of them, as believing it to be useful to the surviving relatives of the testator to draw their attention to the tremendous consequences of the separation of soul and body at seasons of impressibility and reflection.' By the following extract, from the will of the late Mr. Burke, it will be seen, that his sentiments, on this point, coincided with those above expressed. 'First according to the ancient good and laudable custom, of which my heart and understanding recognise the propriety, I bequeath my soul to God, hoping for His mercy through the only merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. My body I desire, if I should die at any place very convenient for its transport thither, (but not otherwise,) to be buried at the church of Baconsfield, near to the bodies of my dearest brother and my dearest son, in all humility praying, that, as we have lived in perfect unity together, we may together have part in the resurrection of the just.'—Roberts on Wills, vol. ii. p. 376.

Him, a consideration which makes his responsibility peculiarly tremendous.*

But to return,—Though we must not, in accommodation to the prevailing prejudices and unnecessary zeal against abstinence and devotion, neglect the imperative duties of retirement, prayer, and meditation; yet, perhaps, as prayer makes so indispensable an article in the Christian life, some retired contemplative persons may apprehend that it makes the whole; whereas prayer is only the operation which sets the machine going. It is the sharpest spur to virtuous action, but not the act itself. The only infallible incentive to a useful life, but not a substitute for that usefulness. Religion keeps her children in full employment. It finds them work for every day in the week, as well as on Sundays.

The praying Christian, on going into the world, feels that his social and religious duties are happily comprised in one brief sentence—'I will *think* upon the commandments to do them.' What the Holy Spirit has so indissolubly joined, he does not separate.

He whose heart has been set in motion in the morning by prayer, who has had his spiritual pulse quickened by a serious perusal of the Holy Scriptures, will find his work growing upon him in regular proportion to his willingness to do it. He is diligently exact in the immediate duties of the passing day. Though procrastination is treated by many as a light evil, he studiously avoids it, because he has felt its mischiefs; he is active even from the love of ease, for he knows that the duties which would have cost him little, if done on the day they were due, may, by the accumulation of many neglected days, cost him much. The fear of this rouses him to immediate exertion. If the case in question be doubtful, he deliberates, he inquires, he prays; if it be clear and pressing, what his hand finds to do, he does with all his might, and in the calls of distress he always acts on his favourite aphorism, that giving soon is giving twice.

Abroad how many duties meet him! He has on his hands the poor that want bread, the afflicted who want comfort, the distressed who want counsel, the ignorant who want teaching, the depressed who want soothing. At home he has his family to watch over. He has to give instruction to his children, and an example to his servants. But his more immediate, as well as more difficult work is with himself, and he knows that this exercise, well performed, can alone enable him wisely to perform the rest. Here he finds work for every faculty of his understanding, every conquest over his will, for every affection of his heart. Here his spirit truly labours. He has to watch, as well as to pray, that his conscience be not darkened by prejudice; that his bad qualities do not assume the shape of virtues, nor his good ones engender self-applause; that his best intentions do not mislead his judgment; that his candour do not degenerate into indifference; nor his strictness into bigotry; that his moderation do not freeze, nor his zeal burn. He has to controul his impatience at the defeat of his most wisely conceived plans. He will find that in his best services there is something that is wrong, much that is wanting; and he feels, that whatever in them is right, is not his own, but the gift of God.

He finds that his obedience is incomplete, that his warmest affections are languid, perhaps his best intentions not realized, his best resolves not followed up. In this view, though he is abased in dust and ashes in looking up to God as the fountain of perfection, he is cheered in looking up to him also as the fountain of mercy in Christ Jesus. He prays, as well as strives, that the knowledge of his own faults may make him more humble, and his sense of the divine mercies more grateful.

He will find that his faith, even though it does not want sincerity, will too frequently want energy. He has, therefore, to watch against cold and heartless prayer; though, perhaps, the humility arising from this consciousness is a benefit in another way. He feels it difficult to bring every 'thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,' yet he goes on cheerily, willing to believe that what may be difficult is not impossible. He has to struggle against over anxiety for temporal things. He has to preserve simplicity of intention, consistency, and perseverance. He has, in short, to watch against a long list of sins, errors, and temptations, which he will find heavier in weight, and more in number, the more closely he looks into his catalogue.

The praying Christian in the world has, above all, to watch against the fear of men, as he may find it more easy to endure the cross than to despise the shame. Even if he have in a good degree conquered his temptation, he may still find a more dangerous enemy in the applause of the world than he found in its enmity. He has observed, that many amiable and even pious persons who are got above the more vulgar allurements of the world, who have surmounted all the temptations of a more sensual kind, who are no longer subdued by its softening luxuries, its seducing pleasures, its dazzling splendours, nor its captivating amusements, have not yet quite escaped this danger. The keen desire of its good opinion, the anxiety for its applause, ensnares many who are got above any thing else which the world has to offer. This is, perhaps, the last lingering sin which cleaves even to those who have made a considerable progress in religion, the still unextinguished passion of a mind great enough to have subdued many other passions.

The danger of the Christian in the world is *from* the world. He is afraid of the sleek, smooth, insinuating, and not discreditable vices; he guards against self-complacency. If his affairs prosper, and his reputation stands high, he betakes himself to his only sure refuge, humble prayer. He knows it is more easy to perform a hundred right deeds, and to keep many virtues in exercise, than 'to keep himself unspotted from the world,' than to hold the things of the world with a loose hand. Even his best ac-

* The late Lord Kenyon was neither afraid nor ashamed to introduce both the doctrine and language of Christianity on these occasions; and we have lately seen other valuable instances of the adoption of this practice.

tions, which may bring him most credit, have their dangers; they make him fear that 'while he has a name to live, he is dead.'

Though much above feeling any joy in vulgar acclamation, he is not insensible to the praise of those who are praised by others; but though not indifferent to the good opinion of good men, the praise even of the best is not his object: he knows that to obtain it, is not the end for which he was sent into the world. His ambition is of a higher order, it has a loftier aim. The praise of man cannot satisfy a spirit which feels itself made for immortality.

He feels that if he had no sin but vanity, the consciousness of that alone, would be sufficient to set him on his guard, to quicken him in prayer, to caution him in conduct.—He does not fear vanity as he fears any other individual vice; as a single enemy against which he is to be on the watch, but as that vice which, if indulged, would poison all his virtues. Among the sins of the inner man, he knows that 'this kind goeth not out but by prayer.' When he hears it said of any popular, and especially of any religious character, 'he is a good man, but he is vain.' He says within himself, he is vain, and therefore, I fear he is not a good man. How many right qualities does vanity rob of their value, how many right actions of their reward!

Every suspicion of the first stirring of vanity in himself, sends him with deeper prostration before his Maker. Lord what is man! shall the praise of a fellow-creature, whose breath is in his nostrils, whose ashes, must soon be mingled with my own, which may even before my own be consigned to kindred dust, shall *his* praise be of sufficient potency to endanger the humility of a being, who is not only looking forward to the applause of those glorious spirits which surround the throne of God, but to the approbation of God himself?

When those with whom he occasionally mixes, see the praying Christian calm and cheerful in the world, they little suspect the frequent struggles, the secret conflicts he has within. Others see his devout and conscientious life, but he alone knows the plague of his own heart. For this plague he seeks the only remedy; to prayer, that balm of hurt minds, he constantly repairs.

The praying Christian endeavours to make even what to some might seem casual expression in Scripture, matter of improvement. He is not contented to devote to the distressed his mere superfluities, he makes requisitions on his frugality to add to his contributions, and he learns this lesson from the highest model.

He observes that He who could feed thousands by a word of His mouth, yet took care not to let the miracle pass without grafting on it a moral maxim, for general use, a religious duty for general practice.—He who could have multiplied to any extent the twelve baskets, as He had done the five loaves, condescended to say, 'gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost; and that he might set an example of prayer in every possible form, He had previously *blessed* the simple but abundant meal, presenting, in this single instance, an union of three great qualities—generosity, economy, and devotion.

The practical Christian observes with grateful admiration, how Scripture has, as it were, let down to the plainest apprehension the habitual duty of constantly looking to God, by a familiar allusion taken from domestic life.—The fidelity, the diligent attention, the watchful observance of 'the eyes of a servant looking to the hand of his Master, and the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress,' is a simple illustration of the Christian's duty, equally intelligible to him who serves, and obligatory on him who is served.

To a worldly man, his own sin appears less than it is; to a good man, greater; not that he sees through a false medium; or aggravates the truth, or forgets the apostle's direction to think soberly; but while the nominal Christian weighs his offences in the scales of the world, the praying Christian brings him to the balance of the sanctuary. The former judges of sin only as he sees it in others; and the worst men in the rank above the vulgar, do not always appear so bad as they are. In his own heart he sees little, because with that heart he is not acquainted. Whereas his own bosom is the very place where the good man looks for sin, and his perceptions of what is wrong are so delicate, that he sees it in its first seed; in short, the one thinks himself worse than others, because he knows himself well; the other thinks himself better, because he knows himself not at all.

When we consider the conflicts and the trials of the conscientious, watchful, praying Christian, we shall estimate aright the value of the consoling promise of that eternal rest from his labours, which supports him under them. And though *rest* is one of the lowest descriptions of the promised bliss of heaven, yet it holds out a cheering prospect of relief and satisfaction to a feeling being, who is conscious of the fallen condition of his mortal nature in all its weakness and imperfection. *Rest*, therefore, is of itself, a promise sufficiently inviting to make him desire to depart and to be with Christ, even independently of his higher hope. The joy unspeakable, the crown of glory, and all those other splendid images of the blessedness of heaven exalt and delight his mind. But it is, though with a higher, yet with a more indefinite delight. He adores without fully comprehending the mighty blessing. But the promise of rest is more intelligible to the heavy-laden Christian; he better understands it, because it is so exactly applicable to his present want and feelings:—*this* is not our rest. It offers the relief longed for by a weary, frail, and feverish being. He who best knows what man wanted, promised to His disciples *peace and rest*, and His Divine Spirit has represented the state of heaven under this image more frequently than any other, as being in more direct contrast to its present state—a state of care, anxiety, and trouble, and a state of sin, the cause of all his other troubles. Perhaps this less elevated view of heaven may occur more rarely to persons of high-wrought feelings in religion, yet to the Christian of a contrary character, it is a never-failing consolation, a home-felt solace, the object of his fervent prayer. What a support to be persuaded that 'the work of righteousness is peace, and the

effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever!'

The Lord's Prayer, a model both for our devotion and our practice.—It teaches the duty of promoting schemes to advance the Glory of God.

It is not customary for kings to draw up petitions for their subjects to present to themselves; much less do earthly monarchs consider the act of petitioning worthy of reward, nor do they number the petitions so much among the services done them, as among the burthens imposed on them. Whereas it is a singular benefit to our fallen race that the King of kings both dictates our petitions, and has promised to recompense us for making them.

In the Lord's prayer may be found the seminal principle of all the petitions of a Christian, both for spiritual and temporal things; and however in the fulness of his heart he will necessarily depart from his model in his choice of expressions: into whatever laminæ he may expand the pure gold of which it is composed, yet he will still find the general principle of his own more enlarged application to God, substantially contained in this brief but finished compendium.

Is it not a striking proof of the divine condescension, that knowing our propensity to err, our blessed Lord should himself have dictated our petitions, partly perhaps as a corrective of existing superstitions, but certainly to leave behind Him a *regulator* by which all future ages should *set* their devotions; and we might perhaps establish it as a safe rule for prayer in general, that any petition which cannot in some shape, be accommodated to the spirit of some part of the Lord's prayer may not be right to be adopted. Here temporal things are kept in their due subordination; they are asked for in great moderation, as an acknowledgment of our dependence on the Giver. The request for the divine intercession we must of course offer for ourselves as the intercessor had not yet assumed his mediatorial office.

There is in this prayer a concatenation of the several clauses, what in human composition the critics call concealed method. The petitions rise out of each other. Every part also is, as it were, fenced round, the whole meeting in a circle; for the desire that God's name may be hallowed, His will be done, and His kingdom come, is referred to, and confirmed by the ascription at the close. If the kingdom, the power, and the glory, are His, then his ability to do and to give, are declared to be infinite.

But, as we have already observed, if we do not make our prayer the ground of our practice, if we do not pray as we believe, and act as we pray, we must not wonder if our petitions are not heard, and consequently not answered.

In the tremendous scene in the Apocalyptic vision, where the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened; the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books; were judged according—not to their prayers, but 'their works.' Surely then Christianity is a practical religion, and in order to use aright the prayer our Lord has given us, we must model our life by it as well as our petitions.

If we pray that the name of God may be hallowed, yet neglect to hallow it ourselves, by family as well as personal devotion, and a conscientious attendance on all the ordinances of public worship, we defeat the end of our praying, by falling short of its obligation.

The practical discrepancies between our prayers and our practice do not end here. How frequently are we solemnly imploring of God, that 'His kingdom may come,' while we are doing nothing to promote his kingdom of grace here, and consequently His kingdom of glory hereafter.

If we pray that God would 'give His Son the heathen for His inheritance,' and yet make it a matter of indifference, whether a vast proportion of the globe should live heathens or die Christians; if we pray that 'the knowledge of the Lord may cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea,' yet act as if we were indifferent whether Christianity ended as well as began at home. If we pray that 'the sound may go out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world,' and yet are satisfied to keep the sound within our own hearing, and the words within our own island, is not this a prayer which goeth out of feigned lips?

When we pray that 'His will may be done,' we know that His will is, that 'all should be saved, that not one should perish.' When, therefore, we assist in sending the Gospel to the dark and distant corners of the earth, then, and not till then, may we constantly desire of God in our prayers, that 'His saving health may be known to all nations.'

For we must vindicate the veracity of our prayer by our exertions, and extend its efficiency by our influence: if we contribute not to the accomplishment of the object for which we pray, what is this but mocking Omniscience, not by unmeaning, but unmeant petitions? If we do nothing we are inconsistent; but if we do worse than nothing, if we oppose, and by our opposition hinder the good which we do not think proper to support, may we not possibly bring on ourselves the appalling charge of being 'found fighting against God!'

It is indeed an easier and a cheaper way, to quiet the conscience by that common anodyne, 'that the heathen are very well as they are, that the morals of the Hindoos are not inferior to those of Christians.' With what sort of Christians these assertors of the rival innocence of Idolators associate, we will not pretend to determine.

But, allowing that we do not always send abroad the very best samples of Christianity, the very best representatives of its practical effects, allowing also that too many who remain at home, and who profess and call themselves Christians, are guilty of crimes which disgrace human nature, yet Christianity renounces them. Christian governments inflict on them capital punishments. While among these poor idola-

tors all these social duties are trampled on, all the suggestions of natural conscience are stifled, rites the most obscene, sacrifices the most bloody are offered; and these crimes are not only committed, but sanctioned, but enjoined; they do not violate religion, they make a part of it. Surely then, politically connected with them as we are, and yet contentedly to leave them in their degraded state of morals, without any attempt for their improvement, do we not by this neglect virtually pronounce, and awfully anticipate their dreadful sentence, 'let him that is unjust, be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.'

Again, it is an easier and a cheaper way to throw the weight off our own shoulders by the cool remark, 'that these things belong not to us, human efforts are superfluous; God must bring them about by a mircle.'—God, it is true, introduced Christianity by miracles, but He established it by means. Miracles, indeed, are His prerogative, but man is his instrument. Had He not sent His gospel and His ministers, it is probable that the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Bythinia, and all proconsular Asia, had never heard of Christianity to this day, which is, indeed, still the case of too many parts of that region.

But is it not equally the effect of divine grace, I had almost said, is it not equally a miracle, when, in the hottest season of the most unrelenting warfare, in the most calamitous period of unusual scarcity, when Britain had the whole civilized world in arms against her, so that she could emphatically say, 'there is none that fighteth for us but only Thou O God—' When it might seem business enough for any but Christians to take care of themselves, even then Britain raised the banner of the cross, not in the most unprofitable crusade for the most fruitless object, but that she might carry the knowledge of Him who suffered on it, to the ends of the habitable globe. Not to redeem His sepulchre from infidels, but to communicate to them the tidings of His resurrection, and of redemption through His blood. Is it not the effect of grace, and still more nearly approaching to a miracle when in a period immediately subsequent, while their fields were yet red with slaughter, and their rivers ran blood, their cities plundered, and their kingdoms desolated, God disposed the hearts of hostile sovereigns, ruling over opposing nations and the tenacious professors of different religions, yet as if actuated by one universal feeling, simultaneously to rise up in one common cause for the accomplishment of this mighty object—when the first use they made of the termination of war was to disseminate the gospel of peace; the first tribute they paid to the glory of God was to publish abroad that grand instrument of good will to men! Let us not then indulge groundless imaginations, as if miracles were wrought to justify indolence! as if a man were to be excused the trouble of being the active agent of Divine Providence.

The miracles wrought at Ephesus seem rather to have been intended as a confirmation of the truth of St. Paul's doctrine, than as the actual instrument of conversion. Many rejected the gospel who saw the miracles. The miracles wrought did not supersede the necessity of the apostle's 'speaking boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.' They did not supersede the necessity at another time, of his continuing to preach among them, for the space of two years, the two great doctrines of his mission, 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Nor did they prevent his thinking it his bounden duty to send to the Ephesians his exquisite epistle, for the furtherance of their faith in the gospel. Here we behold the union of the Bible and the missionary—of the gospel sent and the gospel preached.

'Many,' says the sagacious bishop Butler, 'think there is but one evil, and that evil is superstition; and we know that the epithets of superstitious and enthusiastic have been unsparingly lavished on the most sober and well digested plans for the dispersion of the scriptures abroad. We know that very trifling errors, errors inseparable from all great undertakings, every petty indiscretion, the inevitable consequence of employing a number of inferior agents, have been carefully collected, minutely set down in the note book of observation, and triumphantly produced as unanswerable objections to the whole plan. 'But,' says the profound prelate above-named, in his very able defence of missions, preached before the venerable society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts,* 'many well-disposed persons want much to be admonished what a dangerous thing it is to discountenance what is good, because it is not better, by raising objections to some under parts of it.'

The truth is, *they* are neither enthusiasts nor superstitious, who believe that well-concerted and prudently conducted societies for the promotion of this great object, acting with a deep sense of human imperfection, and in dependence upon the favour of God, will, in due time, with His blessing, without which nothing is strong, nothing is holy, accomplish the great end of bringing all the kingdoms of the world to become the kingdoms of the Redeemer. But *he* is the superstitious, he is the enthusiast, who indulges unfounded expectations, who looks for the fulfilment of declarations which have never been made, who depends upon miracles which have never been announced, who looks for consequences without their predisposing causes, who believes that the unassisted heathen, sunk in intellectual and spiritual darkness, shall call on Him of whom they have not heard, or that they shall hear without a preacher, or that the preacher will be found without being sent.

We might just as reasonably expect to see the beautiful imagery of Oriental metaphor, as displayed in the highly figurative language of the prophets, actually realized. We might as reasonably expect that the rose of Sharon shall literally blossom in the wilderness of Arabia, or the cedars of Lebanon spring up in the sandy vallies of Africa; that the thirsty desert should produce spontaneous springs of water; that the tame and savage animals should live together in friendly compact; that the material hills shall really sink and the vallies rise of themselves;

* Preached at their anniversary meeting, February 16th, 1738—9.

we might, I say, as rationally hope to see these lively illustrations of the fulfilment of the Divine promises literally verified, as to expect Christianity to make its own unassisted way into the distant and desolate corners of the earth. God has committed Christianity into the hands of Christians for universal diffusion.

Let it be observed, that it appears to be no real departure from the subject with which this chapter opened, that reference is not more frequently made in its progress to prayer. This seems to be the less necessary, as we are not reasoning with the irreligious man, but with the Christian, with him who professes to use the Lord's prayer as the pattern of his own devotions; and from the premises of that prayer, these observations are not forced interpretations, but natural deductions.

The Almighty is consistent in all his operations. They always exhibit simplicity and economy. He never works a superfluous miracle. There is also analogy in his works. Christ wrought miracles to relieve the bodily wants of the poor; he works miracles for them no longer, he turns them over to the rich. He wrought miracles on the first conversion of the heathen; He works miracles for them no longer, he now turns them over to Christians. He resigns to human agency, under his blessing, to provide for the spiritual wants of the ignorant, as well as for the temporal wants of the indigent. Christianity and riches are deposited in the hands of Christians, for the more general dispersion of both to the respectively destitute.

And when, if ever, through the unmerited mercy of God, that glorious and devoutly desired day shall arrive, which warms the heart even in the distant perspective of prophecy, when nation shall no more rise against nation, and they shall learn war no more; what is so likely to hasten that triumphant period, what is so likely to turn the sword into a pruning-hook, and to establish lasting peace throughout the world, as that spirit of love and concord which the universal diffusion of gospel light is calculated to impart? What is so likely to produce charity among all the children of the same common Father, as when subjects as well as sovereigns, shall be brought to know God, from the greatest to the least.

Those admirable institutions, whose object it is to lead to this blessed consummation, have already enlarged the borders of Christian charity to an almost indefinite extent, by bringing into contact from every point of the compass, and from almost every city in the civilized world, Christians, who had not so much as heard of each others existence; it has already shown them that whatever difference of education and of government, whatever modifications of opinion had hitherto divided them, the great fundamental principles of love to God, of faith in his Son, and charity to the souls of men, are at length beginning to draw them into a nearer connexion. These general principles of agreement, are already bringing into one point of union, persons whom difference of sentiment had kept asunder as widely as seas had separated, and are the only means, as far as human penetration can foresee, of drawing the cords of amity into still closer bonds.

Already, even in the early stage of this vast enterprize, may we not perceive that it has had a considerable share in promoting mutual good will, reciprocal kindness, and growing confidence, and this with foreigners, who, though they had subdued their enmity, might not so soon have conquered their jealousy? Has it not a powerful tendency to cure any remaining distrust, to confirm good faith, to promote confidence and attachment between nations, whose respect was not perhaps, altogether untinctured with suspicion? May it not break down the wall of partition, which has so long kept us asunder? May it not bring those who were aforetime separated in heart as well as country, to unite in Christian brotherhood, till we become at length of one mind in doctrine, as we already are in regard to this institution. May not the probable results of this Christian confederacy become a ratification between monarchs, firmer than any political compact, stronger than any diplomatic convention? For is it not an instrument of confederation of which the GREAT SEAL IS THE WORD OF GOD? Does it not embrace the two sublime objects of the angelic hosts, by uniting 'glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will towards men?' For what means, we repeat, are so likely to bring churches, who have been hitherto kept in spiritual darkness, to a gradual and devoutly desired reformation, as to disperse that darkness, as our being the honoured instruments of causing the full beams of divine truth to shine more directly upon them?

To descend to the very minutest wheels of this mighty engine; with whatever derision that which has been denominated popular charity may have been treated; its inferior divisions have this advantage, that they set in motion the young and the poor. To the young female of fortune, this subordinate part of the great whole, furnishes a kind of novitiate to her future and more extended sphere of charity, for the details of which this sex has the most leisure. To the poor, like the admirable institutions of the Savings Bank, though for different purposes, it gives them a little and a safe lift in the scale of society. For will they not be less likely to follow in the turbulent train of the seditious demagogue, less disposed by his pernicious but persuasive outcry, to give their stated penny for the promotion of riot and the maintenance of rioters, when that penny has been pre-engaged for the circulation of that Volume, which forbids them to speak evil of dignities, which commands to avoid those who are given to change; to work, to be quiet, to mind their own business; which imperatively says, 'I exhort that prayers and intercessions be made for kings and all in authority;' and above all, will not the Bible be the surest antidote against the infection of the poison contained in that profusion of books, pamphlets, and placards, which, without such a specific threatens both our moral and political destruction.

It is the nature of man to delight in party, he delights to belong to something, to hold to his fellow-creatures, though by the least and lowest

link in the chain of society; let us then take advantage of this his natural weakness. For is it not better to attach him to something that is useful to himself and to others, that he may be less likely to be drawn into such schemes as are destructive of his temporal, as well as of his own highest interests, and dangerous to the security of the state, and of the country. To be connected, though by the lowest and slighest tie, with his superiors, is to the poor man at once an encouragement and a security. To belong to societies of which princes are the patrons, is at once a gratification and a guard; for will not this connexion, remote as it may seem, confirm his abhorrence of those revolutionary societies whose aim is the overthrow of princes?

Let us not then grudge to the poor who have so few pleasures, that pure, and to them that hitherto untasted pleasure, that almost sacred feeling, how much more blessed is it to give than to receive. Let us not deny them the gratification of being humble contributors towards conveying that word of life to others, by which their own souls have been benefited; and to which they are indebted for the knowledge, that it is the duty of Christians to teach others what themselves have been gratuitously taught.

It is, however, most important to recommend that the petty contributions of the poor should never be extorted, nor even wrung from them by undue influence. It must be a willing offering, not pinched from their necessities, but cheerfully accepted, as the thankful tribute of successful industry. With respect to such as are in distress, and especially in debt, it would neither be honest in themselves to give, nor in the collector to receive. A very few indiscretions of this kind have given too inviting a handle, which has been unfairly laid hold of to bring the plan itself into discredit.

To venture one more passage from the prelate already quoted—and who will accuse Bishop Butler of enthusiasm?—'If the gospel had its proper influence in the Christian world in general, as this country is the centre of trade, and the seat of learning, a very few years, in all probability, would settle Christianity in every country in the world *without miraculous assistance*.'

If we, then, in this highly favoured land, are blessed with the volume of Divine Revelation, let us impart it to others with the greater alacrity, from the humiliating recollection that it was no merit of our own which brought the news of eternal life to an island of barbarians and idolaters. Freely we have received, freely let us give.

The sun of righteousness which first arose in the east, rejoicing as a giant to run his course, has travelled in the greatness of his strength, till having made the circuit of the globe, having illuminated the western world, he is once again rising to shed the glories of his orient beams, where they first dawned.

> 'So sinks the day-star in the ocean-bed,
> And yet again repairs his dropping head,
> And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore
> Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.'

Let COMMERCE, then, wherever she spreads her sails, be assured that whether she carries the wealth of Ormus, or of Ind, barbaric pearl and gold from the East; or from the West, the mines of Potosi or Peru, the most precious merchandize with which her vessels can be freighted, is that pearl of great price which the merchantman in the Gospel sold all that he had to purchase.

Let DISCOVERY, wherever she pushes her bold and perilous adventure, wherever she lights on an inhabited nook of land, even should she succeed in exploring the secrets of the polar world, let her be assured that all the wonders for which gaping curiosity impatiently waits, are not to be compared with the wonders contained in that Gospel, which, it is to be hoped, she will make part of her provision for the voyage. Let her be assured, that if she carries the Bible, she will, at return, bring back no news of equal value with that she carries out; will bring back to her native home no tidings of equal joy to the glad tidings of the Gospel she has carried abroad.

Let CONQUEST, though her garments have been rolled in blood, make the vanquished the only reparation in her power, not merely like the conquering Cæsar and Alexander, by carrying civilization in her train, but Christianity; by carrying them this charter of our own immortal hopes. If this mighty boon will not fully expiate the offences of the injurer, it will more than mitigate, it will even more than repay the wrongs of the injured.

Conclusion.

'I WILL be sanctified in them that draw nigh unto me,' says the Almighty by his Prophet. We must, therefore, when we approach him in our devotions, frequently endeavour to warm our hearts, raise our views, and quicken our aspirations with a recollection of His glorious attributes,—of that Omnipotence which can give to all without the least deduction from any, or from Himself; of that ubiquity which renders Him the constant witness of our actions; of that Omniscience which makes him a discerner of our intentions, and which penetrates the most secret disguises of our inmost souls; of that perfect holiness, which should at once be the object of our adoration, and the model of our practice; of that truth, which will never forfeit any of His promises; of that faithfulness, which will never forsake any that trust in Him; of that love, which our innumerable offences cannot exhaust; of that eternity which had place 'before the mountains were brought forth, from everlasting to everlasting He is God;' of that grandeur which has set his glory above the heavens; of that long suffering of God, who is strong and patient, and who is provoked every day; of that justice which will by no means clear the guilty, yet of that mercy which forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin; of that compassion which waits to be gracious; of that goodness which leadeth to repentance; of that purity, which, while it hates sin, invites the sinner to return.

All these attributes are his in the abstract.

He is not only strong, but our strength, not only the giver of life, but life itself, he not only bestows, but *is* salvation, he not only teaches truth, but *is* truth, he not only shows the way to heaven, but *is* the way, not only communicates light, but *is* light.

When we reflect that even His incommunicable attributes are employed, in never-ceasing exercise for the common benefit and happiness of mankind, adoration is melted into gratitude. When we consider, that even His justice, that flaming sword which threatened our eternal exclusion from Paradise, the attribute at which the best may tremble, for who is he that lives and sins not, is turned in our favour by the great propitiation made for sin; that heart must be hard, indeed, which is not softened into love. It is because we are so little accustomed to indulge these reflections, that our natural hardness acquires additional obduracy.

Whatever good there is even in the renewed man, is but a faint adumbration of the perfections of God. The best created things, light itself, lose all their brightness when compared with the uncreated glory from which all they have is borrowed. The heavens are not pure in His sight, behold the moon and it shineth not. He chargeth His angels with folly. The sublimest intellectual intelligences, and the brightest visible operations of His power, are swallowed up in the contemplation of His underived original perfection. The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man, and the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of man.

Yet though the highest conceivable created excellence is thrown into utter darkness, in the comparison with this surpassing splendour, yet these remote resemblances serve to convey some idea, but Oh how weak! some reminding, but Oh how inadequate! some conception, but Oh how faint! of the Divine perfections.

Hence in the highest qualities of the best Christian we have a hint, a rudiment which serves to recal to our mind the Divine excellence, of which they are an emanation.—We use it, not as a means of overvaluing the creature, but of raising our adoration of the infinite, inexhaustible, overflowing fountain of natural, intellectual, and spiritual good. Thus, though we cannot 'search out the Almighty to perfection;' yet these faint traces, are constant intimations to us to imitate, in our low measure and degree, all the imitable attributes of Almighty goodness.—He would never have said, 'be ye holy as I am holy,' if holiness had been absolutely unattainable. There must be an aim, however low, at this conformity to our divine pattern.

The life which the Lord of glory condescended to lead on earth, has introduced us to the nearest possible view of the Divine perfections, and exhibited a clearer prospect of the possibility of a closer imitation of them, than could have been conveyed to us by any other means. His actions are not merely objects of human admiration. They all, with the exception of his miracles, imperatively demand to be imitated, as well as admired. His meekness under reproaches the most contumelious; His patience under sufferings the most exquisite; His combination of active beneficence with unremitting devotion,—for, after days spent in successive acts of charity, He continued all night in prayer to God; His union of constant self-denial, with unwearied bounty; His enduring hunger, who could have relieved it by one of those miracles, so often performed for the relief of others; his compassion for sinners joined with His hatred of sin; His supplication for His enemies, extenuating their guilt by pleading their ignorance. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'

If this religion be not practical, if this practice be not a pattern for our's, we know not what is. While we obey him then in praying for our fellow-creatures, let us remember that we must imitate his Divine philanthropy in assisting them; while we rank ourselves among his admirers by praising his excellences, let us remember we shall only be known to be his disciples when we love one another.

If good works then be indispensable, and Faith be their great influencing principle, both must be kept alive, and kept in exercise by the aliment of prayer. Prayer is the chain of communication with God himself.—The readiest way to be assimilated to his likeness, the best means of promoting our conformity to His will, of advancing our love to Him and to each other. If we neglect prayer, we rob our souls of the prescribed means of our serving him here, and of the fairest foretaste of that communion with Him, which will be our highest happiness hereafter.

The obedience of the heart which grows out of a sound faith, rooted good desires, well-weighed resolutions of fidelity, formed in a higher strength than our own; a belief in the sacred Scriptures so confirmed as not to be shaken by any objections brought against them, by any difficulties to be found in them; the comparing faithfully all we have heard urged against Religion, with all we have seen of its effects, and experienced of its benefits, all this is the solid ground on which future attainments must hereafter be built, a ground to be tried by prayer in the enquiring mind and the seeking heart.

And when our reason is become as strong on the side of Christianity as our belief—when our faith is as enlightened as it is implicit—when the growth of the one only confirms the dominion of the other, this is such an obedience of the heart as will infallibly produce obedience in the life; an obedience which will be both the cause and the consequence of effectual prayer.

The renewing of the soul after the image of God is not otherwise to be obtained than by true spiritual heart-searching prayer. There may be a form of unfelt petitions, a ceremonious avowal of faith, a customary profession of repentance, a general acknowledgment of sin, uttered from the lips to God; but where is His image and superscription written upon the heart? Where is the transforming power of Religion in the life? Where is the living transcript of the Divine original? Where is that holiness to which the vision of the Lord is specifically promised? Where is the light, and life, and grace of the Redeemer exhibited in the temper and

conduct? Yet we are assured, that if we are Christians, there must be an aim at this conformity.

As for the genuine Christian, however weak in faith and defective in obedience, yet he is still seeking, though with slow and faultering steps, the things which are above; he is still striving, though with unequal progress, for the prize of his high calling; he is still looking, though with a dim and feeble eye, for glory, honour, and immortality; He is still waiting, though not with a trust so lively as to annihilate the distance,—to see his eternal redemption drawing nigh.—Though his aims will always be far greater than his attainments, yet he is not discouraged; his hope is above, his heart is above, his treasure is above; no wonder then that his prayers are directed, and a large portion of his wealth sent forward thither, where he himself hopes soon to be. It is but transmitting his riches of both kinds, not only to his future, but his eternal home.

Even if prayer were as worthless, with respect to present advantages, and religion as burthensome as some suppose, it would be a sufficient vindication of both that they lead to eternal bliss. When by a distant journey, we have been long separated from our own beloved habitation, we do not call that the most desirable road back to it which abounds with the gayest objects, but that which will bring us the most safely home. If, indeed, we can amuse ourselves with the scenery, without slackening our pace, or diverging from our path, it is well. It is no offence against the law of love, if we catch in passing, such innocent and safe delights as his bounty has scattered in our path. And if our journey have so many refreshments showered down by the hand of Divine beneficence, what shall be the delights of our home?

If the heavens grow black with clouds, and storms arise, these only serve to quicken our pace, and make us avoid digression. If sickness or accident befal us, our heart is still cheered with the thought that we are nearer home—the future supports us under the present; a little further say we—a little more fatigue, and we shall see the desire of our heart. If we are bent on security rather than amusement, the straightest and the safest way will determine our choice. Heaven is worth more sacrifices of pleasure and of profit than those to which a religious life may subject us; though, after all, it often calls for fewer and lighter than a worldly one imposes. But if it were as rough and thorny as those who have never tried it believe, it would be a sufficient apology for voluntarily encountering its hardships, that it is the only road to heaven.

When the prosperous fool says, 'soul take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for thee,'—the prosperous Christian says, 'soul tremble at thine ease—be on thy guard.—Thou hast, indeed, much goods laid up for thee, but it is in a future world. Lose not a large inheritance for a paltry possession; forfeit not an unalienable reversion for a life interest,—a life which this very night may be required of thee.'

Perhaps even the worldly and thoughtless man, under an occasional fit of dejection, or an accidental disappointment, may be brought to say, 'When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God.'—Oh, think upon Him now, now, when you are in prosperity, now, when your fortunes are flourishing, now when your hill is so strong that you think it shall never be moved—think upon Him when the scene is the brightest, when the world courts, flatteries mislead, and pleasures betray you; think on Him while you are able to think at all, while you possess the capacity of thinking. The time may come, when, 'He may turn his face from you, and you will be troubled.' Think of God when the alluring images of pleasure and of profit would seduce you from him. Prosperity is the season of peculiar peril. 'It is the bright day that bringeth forth the adder.' Think of God when the tempting world says, 'All this will I give thee. Trust not the insolvent world, it has cheated every creditor that ever trusted. It will cheat you.

To those who are yet halting between two opinions, or rather between an opinion and an inclination, to those who approve the right, but pursue the wrong, those who are not without convictions, but which convictions pleasure stifles, or business overrules, those who are balancing between the world and Him who made it, who resolve to reform, but make the resolution a substitute for the performance; and oh how large, and in many points how respectable a class this is!—to these, to the doubting, and the dilatory, we would take the liberty to speak plainly.

It is much to be feared, that secret, unconscious infidelity lies at the bottom of the little progress you make in your spiritual attainments. If the truth, certainty, and inconceivable importance of eternal things were once rooted and grounded in the heart, it would infallibly quicken both devotion and practice. We know, but we do not act upon the knowledge, that our great business in this world is to determine our choice for eternity. This is not a bye work, which may be deferred to any time at the hazard of its not being done at all; it is the imperious business of the present hour, the next may not be granted us. It is not an affair to be kept in reserve, an affair to be postponed till other affairs are settled, for how many souls has this dilatory delusion ruined!

The resolution you may make at this moment, and the practical effect of this resolution may determine your fate for ever. The decision, if delayed, may never be made; the call, now given, may never be repeated. Think what you put to hazard by delay.—There is not an hour in our lives on which eternal life, or eternal death may not depend. Shall we then, for a single moment, make it a matter of debate what our everlasting condition shall be? If it were a decision between two temporal concerns which you were called upon to make, deliberation might be wisdom, because there might be degrees of comparison between their value, and consequently a doubt as to the predominance of the object, and the prudence of your choice. But the inequalities of created things are levelled when brought into comparison with the things of eternity—the difference of more or less, richer or poorer, prosperity or privation,

no longer exists; the distinction is swallowed up when contemplated in the view of endless happiness or endless misery. Here then, if you hesitate, you have already taken your part; irresolution is decision; deliberation is destruction; you have already resolved.

The hand which now holds the pen dares not denounce anathemas, but trembles as it transcribes the divinely inspired denunciation of the prophet Zephaniah. 'The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, it hasteth greatly; it is the voice of the day of the Lord, when the mighty man shall cry bitterly. That day is a day of wrath; a day of trouble and distress; a day of wasteness and desolation; a day of darkness and gloominess; a day of clouds and thick darkness; a day of the trumpet and alarm!'

The awful ruins of imperial Rome, the still more defaced vestiges of learned Athens, present a deeply touching spectacle of departed glory. Still more affecting is it to contemplate in the study of history on the destruction of Carthage, of Babylon, of Memphis, whose very ruins are no longer to be found! How affecting to meditate on ancient Troy, whose very scite can no longer be determined! Yet here no wonder mixes with our solemn feeling. All these noble monuments of human grandeur were made of destructible materials, they could not, from their very nature, last for ever.—But, to a deeply reflecting mind, what is the ruin of temples, towers, palaces, and cities, what is the ruin of 'the great globe itself' compared with the destruction of one soul meant for immortality—a soul furnished by its bountiful Creator with all the means for its instruction, sanctification, redemption, and eternal bliss? And what presents the most mournful picture to us, and is in itself the most dreadful aggravation, is that its consciousness cannot be extinguished; the thought of what he might have been will magnify the misery of what he is—a reflection which will accompany and torment the inextinguishable memory through a miserable eternity. Whether in the instance of the rich man, who 'in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torment,' we might dare believe that some remains of human tenderness for his relatives might survive in a ruined soul; or, whether his anguish was made more bitter, from the reflection, that he had been their corrupter, and therefore dreaded that their punishment might hereafter aggravate his own, we pretend not to say. In any event, it offers a lesson pregnant with instruction. It admonishes every impenitent offender, of the dreadful addition that may be made to his own misery, by that corrupt example which has ruined others. And it will be the consummation of his calamity that he can see nothing but justice in his condemnation.—For it is worth observing, that the man in the parable brings no accusation against the equity of his sentence. Thus shall every condemned sinner 'justify God in his saying, and clear him when he is judged.'

But though the anguish of an undone futurity, and the specific nature of the punishment, are exhibited with awful clearness and explicit exactness, in the gospel; how wisely has the Holy Spirit who dictated it, avoided all particulars of that heavenly happiness which we are yet assured will be without measure and without end; whilst the Elysian groves of the Pagan, and the paradise of the Mahometan have been graphically represented, the former by their poets, the latter in their religious code. The one describes the inhabitants reposing in gloomy bowers in cheerless indolence, with the alternative of a restless activity exercised in contemptible pursuits, and renewing on inferior objects the busy feats in which they had delighted here below! The heroes who during life had slaughtered men, make war on beasts! The mighty warriors, who had made the earth to tremble, condescend in heaven to tame horses! The departed Mussulman receives *his* celestial rewards in scenes of revelry and banquets of voluptuousness! What gratifications for an immaterial, immortal spirit!

The whole scheme of future happiness exhibited in these two systems, is a preposterous provision for the perishable part of man, to the entire exclusion of the immortal principle; both schemes stand in direct opposition to the laws of infinite wisdom, and the express word of Scripture. Both intimate as if the body were the part of our nature which is to exist after death, while the soul is the portion which is to be extinguished. Of a spiritual heaven, neither the obsolete mythology, nor the existing Koran, affords the slightest information.

The Scripture views of heaven are given rather to quicken faith than to gratify curiosity. There the appropriate promises to spiritual beings are purely spiritual. It is enough for believers to know that they shall be for ever with the Lord; and though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like Him. In the vision of the Supreme Good, there must be supreme felicity. Our capacities of knowledge and happiness shall be commensurate with our duration. On earth, part of our enjoyment—a most fallacious part—consists in framing new objects for our wishes; in heaven there shall remain in us no such disquieting desires, for all which *can* be found we shall find in God. We shall not know our Redeemer by the hearing of the ear, but we shall see Him as he is; our knowledge, therefore, will be clear, because it will be intuitive.

It is a glorious part of the promised bliss, that the book of prophecy shall be realized; the book of providence displayed, every mysterious dispensation unfolded, not by conjecture, but by vision. In the grand general view of Revelation, minute description would be below our ideas; circumstantial details would be disparaging; they would debase what they pretend to exalt. We cannot conceive the blessings prepared for us, until he who has prepared reveal them.

If, indeed, the blessedness of the eternal world could be described, new faculties must be given us to comprehend it. If it could be conceived, its glories would be lowered, and our admiring wonder diminished. The wealth that can be counted has bounds; the blessings that can be calculated have limits. We now rejoice in the expectation of happiness inconceivable. To have conveyed it to our full apprehension, our con-

ceptions of it must then be taken from something with which we are already acquainted, and we should be sure to depreciate the value of things unseen, by a comparison with even the best of the things which are seen. In short, if the state of heaven were attempted to be let down to human intelligence, it would be far inferior to the glorious but indistinct glimpses which we now catch from the oracles of God, of joy unspeakable, and full of glory. What Christian does not exult in that grand outline of unknown, unimagined, yet consummate bliss —In THY presence is the fulness of joy, and at *Thy* right hand are pleasures for evermore ?

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

SELECTED AND COMPILED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM VARIOUS PORTIONS OF HER WORKS EXCLUSIVELY ON THAT SUBJECT.

"Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle."

"I will endeavour that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." 2 Peter, c. i.

PREFACE.

FROM a sick, and, in all human probability, a dying bed, the writer of these pages feels an earnest desire to be enabled, with the blessing of God, to execute a little plan which has at different times crossed her mind, but which she never found leisure to accomplish, till the present season of incapacity.

"The importunity of friends,"—that hackneyed apology for works of inferior merit, is not, in the present instance, the less true for being worn threadbare. By many partial friends she has frequently been desired to write a volume exclusively on Prayer. With this request she has always declined complying; because, among other reasons, she was aware that she had previously exhausted—not the subject itself, which is indeed inexhaustible,—but the slender resources of her own mind.

In her, perhaps too numerous, printed works, written on different subjects, and at distant periods, there are very many volumes, in which not only some reference has been made, but some distinct portions assigned, to the all-important subject of Prayer.

It is now her latest and warmest wish to be permitted to collect and examine some of those portions which treat more directly of this great duty; to unite the scattered members into one compact body, and to bring each under its proper head, into one point of view. All she is herself able to do, is to hear these extracts read by kind friends, and to adopt such passages as she may think proper for selection.

Perhaps the silence and solitude of her present nightly watchings may, through Divine grace, impress her own heart with a still deeper sense of the unspeakable importance and value of Prayer, and of the support and consolation which may be granted in answer to this exercise, when every other support and consolation must inevitably fail.

However small may be the use of this compilation to the reader, the writer at least is already reaping one benefit herself from what she has presumed to suggest to others,—the benefit of feeling, as she reviews these pages, how sadly she herself has fallen short in the duties she has so repeatedly recommended. In this re-examination she has sensibly felt how easy it is to be good upon paper, and how difficult in practice.

At the same time she humbly trusts that her very failures may have enabled her to touch these subjects more experimentally than she might have done had her own deficiencies been less powerfully recollected, and less acutely felt.

The Author ventures to hope that her valued friends, to whom this selection is more especially dedicated, will consider it as the last bequest of one, who, about to quit this transitory scene, and feeling the deepest interest in their spiritual prosperity, as also for that of all her fellow Christians, is desirous, by this her final act, to testify at least her affectionate anxiety for their eternal happiness.

The present weak state of the Author must apologize for inaccuracies and repetitions.

Barley-Wood.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

CHAP. I.

The necessity of Prayer founded on the corruption of human nature.

THE subject of man's apostacy is so nearly connected with the subject of Prayer, being indeed that which constitutes the necessity of this duty, that some mention of the one ought to precede any discussion of the other. Let, then, the conviction that we have fallen from our original

state, and that this lapse presents the most powerful incentive to prayer, furnish an apology for making a few preliminary remarks on this great article of our faith.

The doctrine is not the less a fundamental doctrine, because it has been abused to the worst purposes; some having erroneously considered it as leaving us without hope, and others as lending an excuse to unresisted sin.—It is a doctrine which meets us in one unbroken series throughout the whole sacred volume; we find it from the third of Genesis, which records the event of man's apostacy, carried on through the history of its fatal consequences in all the subsequent instances of sin, individual and national, and running in one continued stream from the first sad tale of woe, to the close of the sacred canon in the Apocalyptic Vision.

And, to remove the groundless hope, that this quality of inherent corruption belonged only to the profligate and abandoned, the Divine Inspirer of the sacred writers took especial care, that they should not confine themselves to relate the sins of these alone.

Why are the errors, the weaknesses, and even the crimes of the best of men recorded with equal fidelity? Why are we told of the twice repeated deceit of the father of the faithful? Why of the single instance of vanity in Hezekiah? Why of the too impetuous zeal of Elijah? Why of the error of the almost perfect Moses? Why of the insincerity of Jacob? Why of the far darker crimes of the otherwise holy David? Why of the departure of the wisest of men from that piety displayed with sublimity unparalleled in the dedication of the Temple? Why seems it to have been invariably studied, to record with more minute detail the vices and errors of these eminent men, than even those of the successive impious kings of Israel, and of Judah; while these last are generally dismissed with the brief, but melancholy sentence, that they did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; followed only by too frequent an intimation that they made way for a successor worse than themselves? The answer is, that the truth of our universal lapse could only be proved by transmitting the record of those vices, from which even the holiest men were not exempt.

Had the Holy Scriptures kept back from man the faithful delineations of the illustrious characters to which we have referred, the truth of the doctrine in question, though occasionally felt, and in spite of his resistance, forced upon him, would not have been believed; or, if believed, would not have been acknowledged.

Christianity hangs on a few plain truths; 'that God is, and that he is the rewarder of all that seek him;' that man has apostatised from his original character, and by it has forfeited his original destination: that Christ came into this world and died upon the cross to expiate sin, and to save sinners; that after his ascension into Heaven, he did not leave his work imperfect. He sent his Holy Spirit, who performed his first office by giving to the Apostles miraculous powers. His offices did not cease there; he has indeed withdrawn his miraculous gifts, but he still continues his silent but powerful operations, and that in their due order;—first, that of convincing of sin, and of changing the heart of the sinner, before he assumes the gracious character of the Comforter. What need, then, of heresies to perplex doctrines, or of philosophy to entangle, or of will-worshippers to multiply them?

We do not deny that there are, in Christianity, high and holy mysteries; but these 'secret things,' though they 'belong to God,' have their practical uses for us; they teach us humility, the prime Christian grace; thy send us to prayer, and they exercise faith, the parent attribute of all other graces.

This religion of facts, then, the poorest listeners in the aisles of our churches understand sufficiently, to be made by it wise unto salvation. They are saved by a practical belief of a few simple but inestimable truths.

By these same simple truths, martyrs and confessors, our persecuted saints, and our blessed reformers were saved. By these few simple truths, Locke, and Boyle, and Newton, were saved; not because they saw their religion through the glass of their philosophy, but because theirs was not a 'philosophy, falsely so called;' nor their science, 'a science of opposition;' but a science and a philosophy which were made subservient to Christianity, and because their deep humility sanctified their astonishing powers of mind. These wonderful men, at whose feet the learned world is still satisfied to sit, sat themselves at the feet of Jesus. Had there been any other way but the cross by which sinners could be saved, they, perhaps of all men were best qualified to have found it.

To return, then, to the particular doctrine under consideration:—Let us believe man is corrupt, because the Bible tells us he is so. Let us believe that all were so by nature, even the best, since we learn it from Divine authority. Let us, from the same authority, trace the disorder to its source from a fallen parent, its seat in a corrupt heart, its extent through the whole man, its universality over the entire race.

All are willing to allow that we are subject to frailties, to imperfections, to imfirmities; facts compel us to confess a propensity to crimes, but worldly men confine the commission of them to the vulgar. But to rest here would lead us to a very false estimate of the doctrine in question, contrary to the decisive language of Scripture; it would establish corruption to be an accident, and not a root. It would by a division of offenders into two classes, deny that all offences are derived from one common principle.

If, then, men would examine their own bosoms as closely as they censure the faults of others loudly, we should all find there the incipient stirrings of many a sin, which, when brought into action by circumstances, produce consequences the most appalling. Let us then bless God, not that we are better than other men, but that we are placed by Providence out of the reach of being goaded by that temptation, stimulated by that poverty, which, had they been our lot, might have led to the same termination.

Let, then, the fear of God, the knowledge of His Word, and the knowledge of ourselves, teach us, that there is not, by nature, so wide a difference between ourselves and others as we

fondly imagine; that there is not by nature, a great gulf fixed, that they who are on this side might not pass over to the other. Let us not look to any superior virtue, to any native strength of our own, but let us look with a lively gratitude to that mercy of God which has preserved us from the temptations to which they have yielded. But, above all, let us look to that preventing and restraining grace which is withheld from none who ask it: without this all-powerful grace, Latimer might have led Bonner to the stake; with it Bonner might have ascended the scaffold a martyr to true religion. Without this grace, Luther might have fattened on the sale of indulgences; and with it Leo the Tenth might have accomplished the blessed work of Reformation.

CHAP. II.

The duty of Prayer inferred from the helplessness of man.

MAN is not only a sinful, he is also a helpless, and therefore a dependent being. This offers new and powerful motives for the necessity of prayer, the necessity of looking continually to a higher power, to a better strength than our own. If that Power sustain us not, we fall; if he direct us not, we wander. His guidance is not only perfect freedom, but perfect safety. Our greatest danger begins from the moment we imagine we are able to go alone.

The self-sufficiency of man arising from his imaginary dignity, is a favourite doctrine with the nominal Christian. He feeds his pride with this pernicious aliment. And, as we hear much, so we hear falsely, of the dignity of human nature. Prayer, founded on the true principles of Scripture, alone teaches us wherein our true dignity consists. The dignity of a fallen creature is a perfect anomaly. True dignity, contrary to the common opinion, that it is an inherent excellence, is actually a sense of the want of it; it consists not in our valuing ourselves, but in a continual feeling of our dependence upon God, and an unceasing aim at conformity to his image.

Nothing but a humbling sense of the sinfulness of our nature, of our practised offences, of our utter helplessness, and constant dependence, can bring us to fervent and persevering prayer. How did the faith of the saints of old flourish under a darker dispensation, through all the clouds and ignorance which obscured their views of God! 'They looked unto Him, and were enlightened!' How do their slender means and high attainments reproach us!

David found that the strength and spirit of nature which had enabled him to resist the lion and the bear, did not enable him to resist his outward temptations, nor to conquer his inward corruptions. He therefore prayed, not only for deliverance 'from blood-guiltiness,' for a grievously remembered sin, he prayed for the *principle* of piety, for the *fountain* of holiness, for 'the creation of a clean heart,' for 'the renewing of a right spirit,' for 'truth in the inward parts,' that the 'comfort of God's help might be granted him.' This uniform avowal of the secret workings of sin, this uniform dependence on the mercy of God to pardon, and the grace of God to assist, render his precatory addresses, though they are those of a sovereign and a warrior, so universally applicable to the case of every private Christian.

One of our best poets,—himself an unsuccessful courtier,—from a personal experience of the mortifying feelings of abject solicitation, has said, that if there were the man in the world whom he was at liberty to hate, he would wish him no greater punishment than *attendance and dependence*. But he applies the heavy penalty of this wish to the dependants on *mortal* greatness.

Now, attendance and dependence are the very essence both of the safety and happiness of a Christian. Dependence on God is his only true liberty, as attendance on Him is his only true consolation. The suitor for human favour is liable to continual disappointment; if he knock at the door of his patron, there is probably a general order not to admit him. In the higher case, there is a special promise, that 'to him that knocks it shall be opened.' The human patron hates importunity; the Heavenly Patron invites it. The one receives his suitor according to his humour, or refuses his admission from the caprice of the moment; with the other, 'there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.' 'Come unto me,' is His uniform invitation. The Almighty Donor never puts off His humble petitioner to a more convenient season. *His* Court of Requests is always open. He receives the petition as soon as it is offered; He grants it as soon as it is made; and though he will not dispense with a continuance of the application, yet to every fresh application He promises fresh support. He will still be solicited, but it is in order that he may still bestow. Repeated gifts do not exhaust His bounty, nor lessen His power of fulfilment. Repeated solicitation, so far from wearing His patience, is an additional call for His favour.

Nor is the lateness of the petition any bar to its acceptance; He likes it should be early, but He rejects it not though it be late.

And as past mercies on God's part, so, to the praise of his grace be it said, that past offences on our own part are no hindrance to the application of hearty repentance, or the answer of fervent prayer.

The man in power has many claimants on his favour, and comparatively few boons to bestow. The God of Power has all things in His gift, and only blames the solicitor for coming so seldom, or coming so late, or staying so little a while. He only wishes that his best gifts were more earnestly sought.

When we solicit an earthly benefactor, it is often upon the strength of some pretence to his favour,—the hope of some reward for past services: even if we can produce little claim, we insinuate something like merit. But when we approach our Heavenly Benefactor, so far from having any thing like claim, any thing like merit, to produce, our only true, and our only acceptable plea, is our utter want both of claim

and merit,—is the utter destitution of all that can recommend us; yet we presume to ask favour, when we deserve nothing but rejection, we are encouraged to ask for eternal happiness, when we deserve only eternal punishment. Though we have nothing to produce but disloyalty, we ask for the privileges of subjects; though nothing but disobedience to offer, we plead the privileges of children,—we implore the tenderness of a father.

The petitioner to human power who may formerly have offended his benefactor, contrives to soften his displeasure by representing that the offence was a small one. The devout petitioner to God uses no such subterfuge. In the boldness of faith, and the humility of repentance, he cries, 'Pardon my iniquity, for it is *great*.'

He who does not believe this fundamental truth, 'the helplessness of man,' on which the other doctrines of the Bible are built,—even he who does nominally profess to assent to it as a doctrine of Scripture; yet, if he does not experimentally acknowledge it; if he does not feel it in the convictions of his own awakened conscience, in his discovery of the evil workings of his own heart, and the wrong propensities of his own nature, all bearing their testimony to its truth,—such a one will not pray earnestly for its cure,—will not pray with that feeling of his helplessness, with that sense of dependence on Divine assistance, which alone makes prayer efficacious.

Of this corruption he can never attain an adequate conception, till his progress in religion has opened his eyes on what is the natural state of man. Till this was the case, he himself was as far from desiring the change as he was from believing it necessary. He does not even suspect its existence, till he is in some measure delivered from its dominion.

Nothing will make us truly humble, nothing will make us constantly vigilant, nothing will entirely lead us to have recourse to prayer, so fervently or so frequently, as this ever-abiding sense of our corrupt and helpless nature, as our not being able to ascribe any disposition in ourselves to any thing that is good, or any power to avoid, by our own strength, any thing that is evil.

CHAP. III.

Prayer. Its Definition.

Prayer is the application of want to Him who alone can relieve it, the voice of sin to Him who alone can pardon it. It is the urgency of poverty, the prostration of humility, the fervency of penitence, the confidence of trust. It is not eloquence, but earnestness; not figures of speech, but compunctions of soul. It is the 'Lord save us, we perish,' of drowning Peter; the cry of faith to the ear of mercy.

Adoration is the noblest employment of created beings; confession, the natural language of guilty creatures; praise, the spontaneous expression of pardoned sinners.—Prayer is desire; the abasement of contrition; the energy of gratitude. It is not a mere conception of the mind, nor an effort of the intellect, nor an act of the memory; but an elevation of the soul towards its Maker. It is the devout breathing of a creature struck with a sense of its own misery, and of the infinite holiness of Him whom it is addressing, experimentally convinced of its own emptiness, and of the abundant fulness of God, of his readiness to hear, of his power to help, of his willingness to save. It is not an emotion produced in the senses, nor an effect wrought by the imagination; but a determination of the will, an effusion of the heart.

Prayer is the guide to self-knowledge, by prompting us to look after our sins, in order to pray against them; it is a motive to vigilance, by teaching us to guard against those sins which, through self-examination, we have been enabled to detect.

Prayer is an act both of the understanding and of the heart. The understanding must apply itself to the knowledge of the Divine perfections, or the heart will not be led to the adoration of them. It would not be a *reasonable* service if the mind was excluded. It must be rational worship, or the human worshipper would not bring to the service the distinguishing faculty of his nature, which is reason. It must be spiritual worship, or it would want the distinctive quality to make it acceptable to Him who is a spirit, and who has declared that he will be worshipped 'in spirit and in truth.'

Prayer is right in itself as the most powerful means of resisting sin and advancing in holiness. It is above all right, as every thing is which has the authority of Scripture, the command of God, and the example of Christ.

There is a perfect consistency in all the ordinations of God; a perfect congruity in the whole scheme of his dispensations. If man were not a corrupt creature, such prayer as the Gospel enjoins would not have been necessary. Had not prayer been an important means for curing those corruptions, a God of perfect wisdom would not have ordered it. He would not have prohibited every thing which tends to inflame and promote them, had they not existed; nor would he have commanded every thing that has a tendency to diminish and remove them, had not their existence been fatal.—Prayer, therefore, is an indispensable part of his economy and of our obedience.

It is a hackneyed objection to the use of Prayer, that it is offending the omniscience of God to suppose he requires information of our wants. But no objection can be more futile. We do not pray to inform God of our wants, but to express our sense of the wants which he already knows. As he has not so much made his promises to our necessities as to our requests, it is reasonable that our requests should be made before we can hope that our necessities will be relieved.—God does not promise to those who want that they shall 'have,' but to those who 'ask;' nor to those who need that they shall 'find,' but to those who 'seek.' So far, therefore, from his previous knowledge of our wants being a ground of objection to Prayer, it is, in fact, the true ground for our application. Were he not Knowledge itself, our information would

be of as little use, as our application would be, were he not Goodness itself.

We cannot attain to a just notion of Prayer while we remain ignorant of our own nature, of the nature of God as revealed in Scripture, of our relation to Him, and dependence on Him. If, therefore, we do not live in the daily study of the Holy Scriptures, we shall want the highest motives to this duty, and the best helps for performing it; if we do, the cogency of these motives, and the inestimable value of these helps, will render argument unnecessary, and exhortation superfluous.

One cause, therefore, of the dulness of many Christians in Prayer, is their slight acquaintance with the sacred volume. They hear it periodically, they read it occasionally, they are contented to know it historically, to consider it superficially; but they do not endeavour to get their minds imbued with its spirit. If they store their memory with its facts, they do not impress their hearts with its truths. They do not regard it as the nutriment on which their spiritual life and growth depend. They do not pray over it: they do not consider all its doctrines as of practical application; they do not cultivate that spiritual discernment, which alone can enable them judiciously to appropriate its promises, and apply its denunciations to their own actual case. They do not use it as an unerring line to ascertain their own rectitude, or detect their own obliquities.

In our retirements we too often fritter away our precious moments—moments rescued from the world—in trivial, sometimes, it is to be feared in corrupt thoughts. But if we must give the reins to our imagination, let us send this excursive faculty to range among great and noble objects. Let it stretch forward, under the sanction of faith and the anticipation of prophecy, to the accomplishment of those glorious promises and tremendous threatenings which will soon be realized in the eternal world. These are topics which, under the safe and sober guidance of Scripture, will fix its largest speculations, and sustain its loftiest flights. The same Scripture, while it expands and elevates the mind, will keep it subject to the dominion of truth; while at the same time it will teach it, that its boldest excursions must fall infinitely short of the astonishing realities of a future state.

Though we cannot pray with a too deep sense of sin, we may make our sins too exclusively the object of our prayers. While we keep, with a self-abasing eye, our own corruptions in view, let us look with equal intentness on that mercy which cleanseth from all sin. Let our prayers be all humiliation, but let them not be all complaint. When men indulge no other thought but that they are attainted rebels, the hopelessness of pardon hardens them into disloyalty. Let them look to the mercy of the King, as well as to the rebellion of the subject. If we contemplate his grace as displayed in the Gospel, then, though our humility will increase, our despair will vanish. Gratitude in this, as in human instances, will create affection, 'We love him because he first loved us.'

Let us, therefore, always keep our unworthiness in view, as a reason why we stand in need of the mercy of God in Christ; but never plead it as a reason why we should not draw nigh to him to implore that mercy. The best men are unworthy for their own sakes; the worst, on repentance, will be accepted for his sake, and through his merits.

In prayer, then, the perfections of God, and especially, his mercies in our redemption, should occupy our thoughts, as much as our sins; our obligations to him as much as our departures from him. We should keep up in our hearts a constant sense of our own weakness, not with a design to discourage the mind and depress the spirits, but with a view to drive us out of ourselves, in search of the Divine assistance. We should contemplate our infirmity, in order to draw us to look for his strength, and to seek that power from God which we vainly look for in ourselves: we do not tell a sick friend of his danger in order to grieve or terrify him, but to induce him to apply to his physician, and to have recourse to his remedy.

Among the charges which have been brought against serious piety, one is, that it teaches men to despair. The charge is just, in one sense, as to the fact; but false in the sense intended. It teaches us to despair, indeed, of ourselves, while it inculcates that faith in a Redeemer, which is the true antidote to despair. Faith quickens the doubting, while it humbles the presumptuous spirit. The lowly Christian takes comfort in the blessed promise, that God will never forsake them that are his. The presumptuous man is equally right in the doctrine; but wrong in applying it. He takes that comfort to himself which was meant for another class of characters. The mal-appropriation of Scripture promises and threatenings is the cause of much error and delusion.

Some devout enthusiasts have fallen into error by an unnatural and impracticable disinterestedness, asserting that God is to be loved exclusively for himself, with an absolute renunciation of any view of advantage to ourselves; yet that prayer cannot be mercenary, which involves God's glory with our own happiness, and makes his will the law of our requests. Though we are to desire the glory of God supremely; though this ought to be our grand actuating principle; yet he has graciously permitted, commanded, invited us, to attach our own happiness to this primary object. The Bible exhibits not only a beautiful, but an inseparable combination of both, which delivers us from the danger of preposterously imagining, than an absolute renunciation of all benefit to ourselves is necessary for the promotion of God's glory on the one hand; and on the other, from seeking any happiness independent of him, and underived from him. In enjoining us to love him supremely, he has connected an unspeakable blessing with a paramount duty, the highest privilege with the most positive command.

What a triumph for the humble Christian to be assured, that 'the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth,' is the God of his life, to know that he is even invited to take the Lord for his God. To close with God's offers, to accept his invitations, to receive God

as our portion must surely be more pleasing to our heavenly Father, than separating our happiness from his glory. To disconnect our interests from his goodness, is at once to detract from his perfections, and to obscure the brightness of our own hopes. The declarations of the inspired writers are confirmed by the authority of the heavenly hosts. They proclaim that the glory of God and the happiness of his creatures, so far from interfering, are connected with each other. We know but of one anthem composed and sung by angels, and this most harmoniously combines 'the glory of God in the highest, with peace on earth, and good will to men.'

'The beauty of Scripture,' says the great Saxon reformer, 'consists in pronouns.' This God is *our* God; God, even our *own* God shall bless us. How delightful the appropriation! to glorify him as being in himself consummate excellence, and to love him from the feeling that his excellence is directed to our felicity! Here modesty would be ingratitude, disinterestedness rebellion. It would be severing ourselves from him, in whom we live, and move, and are; it would be dissolving the astonishing connection which he had condescended to establish between himself and his rational creatures.

The Scripture Saints make this union the chief ground of their grateful exultation: '*My* strength,' '*my* rock,' '*my* fortress,' '*my* deliverer!' Again, 'let the God of *my* salvation be exalted!' Now take away the pronoun, and substitute the article *the*, how comparatively cold is the impression! The consummation of the joy arises from the peculiarity, the intimacy, the endearment of the relation.

Nor to the liberal Christian is the grateful joy diminished, when he blesses his God as 'the God of them that trust in him.' All general blessings, will he say, all providential mercies, are mine individually, are mine as completely as if no other shared in the enjoyment—life, light, the earth and heavens, the sun and stars, whatsoever sustains the body, and recreates the spirits? My obligation is as great as if the mercy had been made purely for me; as great? nay, it is greater; it is augmented by a sense of the millions who participate in the blessing. The same enlargement of personal obligation holds good, nay, rises higher, in the mercies of Redemption. The Lord is *my* Saviour, as completely as if he had redeemed only me. That he has redeemed 'a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,' is diffusion without abatement; it is general participation without individual diminution. Each has all.

In adoring the providence of God, we are apt to be struck with what is new and out of course, while we too much overlook long habitual, and uninterrupted mercies. But common mercies, if less striking, are more valuable, both because we have them always, and for the reason above assigned, because others share them. The ordinary blessings of life are overlooked for the very reason that they ought to be most prized, because they are most uniformly bestowed. They are most essential to our support, and when once they are withdrawn, we begin to find that they are also most essential to our comfort. Nothing raises the pride of a blessing like its removal, whereas it was its continuance which should have taught us its worth. We require novelties to awaken our gratitude, not considering that it is the duration of mercies which enhances their value. We want fresh excitements. We consider mercies long enjoyed as things of course, as things to which we have a sort of claim by prescription; as if God had no right to withdraw what he has once bestowed, as if he were obliged to continue what he has once been pleased to confer.

But that the sun has shown unremittingly from the day that God created him, is not a less stupendous exertion of power, than that the hand which fixed him in the heavens, and marked out his progress through them, once said by his servant, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gideon.' That he has gone on in his strength, driving his uninterrupted career, and 'rejoicing as a giant to run his course,' for six thousand years, is a more astonishing exhibition of Omnipotence than that he should have been once suspended by the hand which set him in motion. That the ordinances of Heaven, that the established laws of nature, should have been for one day interrupted to serve a particular occasion, is a less real wonder, and certainly a less substantial blessing, than that in such a multitude of ages they should have pursued their appointed course, for the comfort of the whole system.

As the affections of the Christian ought to be set on things above, so it is for them that his prayers will be chiefly addressed. God, in promising to 'give those who delight in him the desire of their heart,' could never mean temporal things; for these they might desire improperly as to the object, and inordinately as to the degree. The promise relates principally to spiritual blessings. He not only gives us these mercies, but the very desire to obtain them is also his gift. Here our prayer requires no qualifying, no conditioning, no limitation. We cannot err in our choice, for God himself is the object of it; we cannot exceed in the degree, unless it were possible to love him too well, or to please him too much.

God shows his munificence in encouraging us to ask most earnestly for the greatest things, by promising that the smaller 'shall be added unto us.' We therefore acknowledge his liberality most, when we request the highest favours. He manifests His infinite superiority to earthly fathers, by chiefly delighting to confer those spiritual gifts which *they* less solicitously desire for their children, than those worldly advantages on which God sets so little value.

We should endeavour to render our private devotions effectual remedies for our own particular sins. Prayer against sin, in general, is too indefinite to reach the individual case. We must bring it home to our own hearts, else we may be confessing another man's sins, and overlooking our own. If we have any predominant fault, we should pray more especially against the fault. If we pray for any virtue of which we particularly stand in need, we should dwell on our own deficiencies in that virtue, till our souls become deeply affected with our want of it. Our prayers should be circumstantial, not

as was before observed, for the information of Infinite Wisdom, but for the stirring up of our own dull affections. And as the recapitulation of our wants tends to keep up a sense of our dependence, the enlarging on our especial mercies will tend to keep alive a sense of gratitude; while indiscriminate petitions, confessions, and thanksgiving, leave the mind to wander in indefinite devotion, and unaffecting generalities, without personality, and without appropriation. It must be obvious, that we except th se grand universal points in which all have an equal interest, and which must always form the essence of family, and, especially, of public prayer.

As we ought to live in a spirit of obedience to his commands, so we should live in a frame of waiting for his blessings on our prayers, and in a spirit of gratitude when we have obtained it. This is that 'preparation of the heart' which would always keep us in a posture for duty. If we desert the duty because an immediate blessing does not visibly attend it, it shows that we do not serve God out of conscience, but selfishness; that we grudge expending on Him that service which brings us in no immediate interest. Though he grants not our petition, let us never be tempted to withdraw our application.

Our reluctant devotions may remind us of the remark of a certain great political wit,* who apologized for his late attendance in parliament, by his being detained while a party of soldiers were *dragging a volunteer* to his duty. How many excuses do we find for not being in time! How many apologies for brevity! How many evasions for neglect! How unwilling, too often, are we to come into the Divine presence, how reluctant to remain in it! Those hours which are least valuable for business, which are least seasonable for pleasure, we commonly give to religion. Our energies, which were so readily exerted in the society we have just quitted, are sunk as we approach the Divine presence. Our hearts, which were all alacrity in some frivolous conversation, become cold and inanimate, as if it were the natural property of devotion to freeze the affections. Our animal spirits, which so readily performed their functions before, now slacken their vigour, and lose their vivacity. The sluggish body sympathizes with the unwilling mind, and each promotes the deadness of the other; both are slow in listening to the call of duty; both are soon weary in performing it. How do our fancies rove back to the pleasures we have been enjoying! How apt are the diversified images of those pleasures to mix themselves with our better thoughts, to pull down our higher aspirations! As prayer requires all the energies of the compound being of man, so we too often feel as if there were a confederacy of body, soul, and spirit, to disincline and disqualify us for it.

When the heart is once sincerely turned to religion, we need not, every time we pray, examine into every truth, and seek for conviction over and over again; but assume that those doctrines are true, the truth of which we have already proved. From a general and fixed impression of these principles, will result a taste, a disposedness, a love so intimate, that the convictions of the understanding will become the affections of the heart.

To be deeply impressed with a few fundamental truths, to digest them thoroughly, to meditate on them seriously, to pray over them fervently, to get them deeply rooted in the heart, will be more productive of faith and holiness, than to labour after variety, ingenuity, or elegance. The indulgence of imagination will rather distract than edify. Searching after ingenious thoughts will rather divert the attention from God to ourselves, than promote fixedness of thought, singleness of intention, and devotedness of spirit. Whatever is subtle and refined, is in danger of being unscriptural. If we do not guard the mind, it will learn to set more value on original thoughts than devout affections. It is the business of prayer to cast down imaginations which gratify the natural activity of the mind, while they leave the heart unhumbled.

We should confine ourselves to the present business of the present moment; we should keep the mind in a state of perpetual dependence; we should entertain no long views. '*Now* is the accepted time.' 'To-day we must hear his voice.' 'Give us *this* day our daily bread.' The manna will not keep till to-morrow: to-morrow will have its own wants, and must have its own petitions. To-morrow we must seek anew the bread of heaven.

We should, however, avoid coming to our devotions with unfurnished minds. We should be always laying in materials for prayer, by a diligent course of serious reading, by treasuring up in our minds the most important truths. If we rush into the Divine presence with a vacant, or ignorant, or unprepared mind, with a heart full of the world; as we shall feel no disposition or qualification for the work we are about to engage in, so we cannot expect that our petitions will be heard or granted.' There must be some congruity between the heart and the object, some affinity between the state of our minds and the business in which they are employed, if we would expect success in the work.

We are often deceived both as to the principle and the effect of our prayers. When, from some external cause, the heart is glad, the spirits light, the thoughts ready, the tongue voluble, a kind of spontaneous eloquence is the result; with this we are pleased, and this ready flow we are willing to impose on ourselves for piety.

On the other hand, when the mind is dejected, the animal spirits low, the thoughts confused; when apposite words do not readily present themselves, we are apt to accuse our hearts of want of fervour, to lament our weakness, and to mourn that, because we have had no pleasure in praying our prayers have, therefore, not ascended to the throne of mercy. In both cases we, perhaps, judge ourselves unfairly. These unready accents, these faltering praises, these ill-expressed petitions, may find more acceptance than the florid talk with which we were so well satisfied: the latter consisted, it may be, of shining thoughts, floating on the fancy, eloquent words dwelling on the lips; the former might be the sighing of a contrite spirit abased by the feeling of its own unworthiness, and

* Mr Sheridan.

awed by the perfections of a holy and heart-searching God. The heart is dissatisfied with its own dull and tasteless repetitions which, with all their imperfections, Infinite Goodness may, perhaps, hear with favour.*—We may not only be elated with the fluency but even with the fervency of our prayers. Vanity may grow out of the very act of renouncing it, and we may begin to feel proud at having humbled ourselves so eloquently.

There is, however, a strain and spirit of prayer equally distinct from that facility and copiousness for which we certainly are never the better in the sight of God, and from that constraint and dryness for which we may be never the worse. There is a simple, solid, pious strain of prayer, in which the supplicant is so filled and occupied with a sense of his own dependence, and of the importance of the things for which he asks, and so persuaded of the power and grace of God through Christ to give him those things, that while he is engaged in it, he does not merely imagine, but feels assured that God is nigh to him as a reconciled Father, so that every burden and doubt are taken off from his mind. 'He knows,' as St. John expresses it, 'that he has the petitions he desired of God,' and feels the truth of that promise, 'while they are yet speaking I will hear. This is the perfection of Prayer.

CHAP. IV.

On the Effects of Prayer.

It is objected by a certain class, and on the specious ground of humility too, though we do not always find the objector himself quite as humble as his plea would be thought, that it is arrogant in such insignificant beings as we are to presume to lay our petty necessities before the Great and Glorious God, who cannot be expected to condescend to the multitude of trifling and even interfering requests which are brought before him by his creatures. These and such like objections arise from mean and unworthy thoughts of the Great Governor of the Universe. It seems as if those who make them considered the Most High as 'such a one as themselves;' a Being, who can perform a certain given quantity of business, but who would be overpowered with an additional quantity. Or, at best, is it not considering the Almighty in the light, not of an Infinite God, but of a great man, of a minister, or a king, who, while he superintends public and national concerns, is obliged to neglect small and individual petitions; because his hands being full, he cannot spare that leisure and attention which suffice for every thing? They do not consider him as that infinitely gracious Being, who, while he beholds at once all that is doing in heaven and in earth, is at the same time as attentive to the prayer of the poor destitute, as present to the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner, as if each of these forlorn creatures were individually the object of his undivided attention.

These critics, who are for sparing the Supreme Being the trouble of our prayers, and who, if I may so speak without profaneness, would relieve Omnipotence of part of his burden, by assigning to his care only such a portion as may be more easily managed, seem to have no adequate conception of his attributes.

They forget that infinite wisdom puts him as easily within reach of all knowledge, as infinite power does of all performance; that he is a Being in whose plans complexity makes no difficulty, variety no obstruction, and multiplicity no confusion; that to ubiquity distance does not exist; that to infinity space is annihilated; that past, present, and future, are discerned more accurately at one glance of His eye, to whom a thousand years are as one day, than a single moment of time or a single point of space can be by ours.

Another class continue to bring forward, as pertinaciously as if it had never been answered, the exhausted argument, that seeing God is immutable, no petitions of ours can ever change Him: that events themselves being settled in a fixed and unalterable course, and bound in a fatal necessity, it is folly to think that we can disturb the established laws of the universe, or interrupt the course of Providence by our prayers; and that it is absurd to suppose these firm decrees can be reversed by any requests of ours.

Without entering into the wide and trackless field of fate and free will, we would only observe, that these objections apply equally to all human actions as well as to prayer. It may therefore with the same propriety be urged, that seeing God is immutable and his decrees unalterable, therefore our *actions* can produce no change in Him or in our own state. Weak as well as impious reasoning! It may be questioned whether even the modern French and German philosophers might not be prevailed upon to acknowledge the existence of God, if they might make such a use of his attributes.

How much more wisdom as well as happiness results from a humble Christian spirit! Such a plain practical text as 'Draw near unto God, and he will draw near unto you,' carries more consolation, more true knowledge of his wants and their remedy to the heart of a penitent sinner, than all the tomes of casuistry, which have puzzled the world ever since the question was first set afloat by its original propounders.

And as the plain man only got up and walked, to prove there was such a thing as motion, in answer to the philosopher who, in an elaborate theory, denied it; so the plain Christian, when he is borne down with the assurance that there is no efficacy in prayer, requires no better argument to repel the assertion than the good he finds in prayer itself. A Christian knows, because he feels, that prayer is, though in a way to him inscrutable, the medium of con-

* Of these sort of repetitions, our admirable Church Liturgy has been accused as a fault; but this defect, if it be one, happily accommodates itself to our infirmities. Where is the favoured being whose attention never wanders, whose heart accompanies his lips in every sentence? Is there no absence of mind in the petitioner, no wandering of the thoughts, no inconstancy of the heart, which these repetitions are wisely calculated to correct, to rouse the dead attention, to bring back the strayed affections?

nexion between God and his rational creatures, the method appointed by Him to draw down his blessings upon us. The Christian knows that prayer is the appointed means of uniting two ideas, one of the highest magnificence, the other of the most profound lowliness, within the compass of the imagination; namely, that it is the link of communication between 'the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity,' and that heart of the 'contrite in which he delights to dwell.' He knows that this inexplicable union between beings so unspeakably, so essentially different, can only be maintained by prayer; that this is the strong but secret chain which unites time with eternity, earth with heaven, man with God.

The plain Christian, as was before observed, cannot explain why it is so; but while he *feels* the efficacy, he is contented to let the learned *define* it; and he will no more postpone prayer till he can produce a chain of reasoning on the manner in which he derives benefit from it, than he will postpone eating till he can give a scientific lecture on the nature of digestion: he is contented with knowing that his meat has nourished him: and he leaves to the philosopher, who may choose to defer his meal till he has elaborated his treatise, to starve in the interim.—The Christian *feels* better than he is able to explain, that the functions of his spiritual life can no more be carried on without habitual prayer, than those of his natural life without frequent bodily nourishment. He feels renovation and strength grow out of the use of the appointed means, as necessarily in the one case as in the other. He feels that the health of his soul can no more be sustained, and its powers kept in continual vigour by the *prayers* of a distant day, than his body by the *aliment* of a distant day.

But there is one motive to the duty in question, far more constraining to the true believer than all others that can be named; more imperative than any argument on its utility, than any conviction of its efficacy, even than any experience of its consolations. *Prayer is the command of God;* the plain, positive, repeated injunction of the Most High, who declares, 'He will be inquired of.' This is enough to secure the obedience of the Christian, even though a promise were not, as it always is, attached to the command. But in this case, to our unspeakable comfort, the promise is as clear as the precept: '*Ask*, and ye shall *receive*.' This is encouragement enough for the plain Christian. As to the *manner* in which prayer is made to coincide with the general scheme of God's plan in the government of human affairs; how God has left himself at liberty to reconcile our prayer with his own predetermined will, the Christian does not very critically examine, his precise and immediate duty being to pray, and not to examine.

In the mean time it is enough for the humble believer to be assured, that the Judge of all the earth is doing right; it is enough for him to be assured in that word of God 'which cannot lie,' of numberless actual instances of the efficacy of prayer in obtaining blessings and averting calamities, both national and individual; it is enough for him to be convinced experimentally by that internal evidence which is perhaps paramount to all other evidence, the comfort he himself has received from prayer, when all other comforts have failed and, above all, to end with the same motive with which we began, the only motive indeed which *he* requires for the performance of any duty; it is motive enough for him,—that *Thus saith the Lord.*

Others there are, who, perhaps not controverting any of these premises, yet neglect to build practical consequences on the admission of them; who neither denying the duty nor the efficacy of prayer, yet go on to live either in the irregular observance or the total neglect of it, as appetite, or pleasure, or business, or humour, may happen to predominate; and who by living almost without prayer, may be said, 'to live almost without God in the world.' To such we can only say, that they little know what they lose. The time is hastening on when they will look upon those blessings as invaluable, which now they think not worth asking for; when they will bitterly regret the absence of those means and opportunities which now they either neglect or despise. 'O that they were wise! that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end!'

There are again, others, who it is to be feared, having once lived in the habit of prayer, yet not having been well grounded in those principles of faith and repentance on which genuine prayer is built, have by degrees totally discontinued it. 'They do not find,' say they, 'that their affairs prosper the better or are the worse; or perhaps they were unsuccessful in their affairs even before they dropt the practice, and so had no encouragement to go on.' They do not *know* that they had no encouragement; they do not *know* how much worse their affairs might have gone on, had they discontinued it sooner, or how their prayers helped to retard their ruin. Or they do not *know* that perhaps 'they asked amiss,' or that, if they had obtained what they asked, they might have been far more unhappy. For a true believer never 'restrains prayer,' because he is not certain that he obtains every individual request; for he is persuaded that God, in compassion to our ignorance, sometimes in great mercy withholds what we desire, and often disappoints his most favoured children by giving them not what they ask, but what he knows is really good for them. The froward child, as a pious prelate* observes, cries for the shining blade, which the tender parent withholds, knowing it would cut his fingers.

Thus to persevere when we have not the encouragement of visible success, is an evidence of tried faith. Of this holy perseverance Job was a noble instance. Defeat and disappointment rather stimulated than stopped *his* prayers Though in a vehement strain of passionate eloquence he exclaims, 'I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment:' yet so persuaded was he notwithstanding of the duty of continuing this holy importunity, that he persisted against all human hope, till he attained to that exalted pitch of

* Bishop Hall

unshaken faith, by which he was enabled to break out into that sublime apostrophe, 'Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him.'

But may we not say that there is a considerable class, who not only bring none of the objections which we have stated against the use of prayer; who are so far from rejecting, that they are exact and regular in the performance of it; who yet take it up on as low ground as is consistent with their ideas of their own safety; who, while they consider prayer as an indispensable form, believe nothing of that change of heart and of those holy tempers which it is intended to produce? Many, who yet adhere scrupulously to the letter, are so far from entering into the spirit of this duty, that they are strongly inclined to suspect those of hypocrisy or fanaticism who adopt the true scriptural views of prayer. Nay, as even the Bible may be so wrested as to be made to speak almost any language in support of almost any opinion, these persons lay hold on Scripture itself, to bear them out in their own slight views of this duty; and they profess to borrow from thence the ground of that censure which they cast on the more serious Christians. Among the many passages which have been made to convey a meaning foreign to their original designs, none have been seized upon with more avidity by such persons than the pointed censures of our Saviour on those 'who for a *pretence* make long prayers;' as well as on those 'who use vain repetitions, and think they shall be heard for much speaking.' Now the things here intended to be reproved were the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the ignorance of the heathen, together with the error of all those who depended on the success of their prayers, while they imitated the deceit of the one, or the folly of the other. But our Saviour never meant that those severe reprehensions should cool or abridge the devotion of pious Christians, to which they do not at all apply.

More or fewer words, however, so little constitute the true value of prayer, that there is no doubt but one of the most affecting specimens on record is the short petition of the Publican, full fraught as it is with that spirit of contrition and self-abasement which is the very principle and soul of prayer. And this specimen, perhaps, is the best model for that sudden lifting up of the heart which we call ejaculation. But we doubt, in general, whether the few hasty words, to which these frugal petitioners would stint the scanty devotions of others and themselves, will be always found ample enough to satisfy the humble penitent, who, being a sinner, has much to confess; who, hoping he is a pardoned sinner, has much to acknowledge. Such a one, perhaps, cannot always pour out the fulness of his soul within the prescribed abridgments.

Even the sincerest Christian, when he wishes to find his heart warm, has often to lament its coldness though he feels that he has received much, and has, therefore, much to be thankful for, yet he is not able at once to bring his wayward spirit into such a posture as shall fit it for the solemn duty. Such a one has not merely his form to repeat, but he has his tempers to reduce to order, his affections to excite, and his peace to make. His thoughts may be realizing the sarcasm of the Prophet on the idol Baal, 'they may be gone a journey,' and must be recalled; his heart, perhaps, 'sleepeth, and must be awaked.' A devout supplicant, too, will labour to affect and warm his mind with a sense of the great and gracious attributes of God, in imitation of the holy men of old. Like Jehosaphat, he will sometimes enumerate 'the power and the might, and the mercies of the Most High,' in order to stir up the sentiments of awe, and gratitude, and love, and humility in his own soul.* He will labour to imitate the example of his Saviour, whose heart dilated with the expression of the same holy affections. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.' A heart thus animated, thus warmed with Divine love, cannot always scrupulously limit itself to the mere *business* of prayer, if I may so speak. It cannot content itself with merely spreading out its own necessities, but expands in contemplating the perfections of Him to whom he is addressing them.

The humble supplicant, though he be no longer *governed* by a love of the world, yet, grieves to find that he cannot totally exclude it from his thoughts. Though he has on the whole a deep sense of his own wants and of the abundant provision which is made for them in the Gospel; yet, when he most wishes to be rejoicing in those strong motives for love and gratitude, alas! even then he has to mourn his worldliness, his insensibility, his deadness. He has to deplore the littleness and vanity of the objects which are even then drawing away his heart from his Redeemer. The best Christian is but too liable during the temptations of the day, to be ensnared by 'the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,' and is not always brought without effort to reflect that he is but dust and ashes. How can even good persons, who are just come, perhaps, from listening to the flattery of their fellow worms, acknowledge before God, without any preparation of the heart, that they are miserable sinners? They require a little time to impress on their own souls the truth of that solemn confession of sin which they are making to him, without which, brevity, and not length might constitute hypocrisy.

Even the sincerely pious have in prayer grievous wanderings to lament, from which others mistakingly suppose the advanced Christian to be exempt. Such wanderings that, as an old divine has observed, it would exceedingly humble a good man, could he, after he had prayed, be made to see his prayers written down, with exact interlineations of all the vain and impertinent thoughts which had thrust themselves in amongst them. So that such a one will, indeed, from a strong sense of these distractions, feel deep occasion, with the Prophet, to ask forgiveness for 'the iniquity of his *holy* things;' and would find cause enough for humiliation every night, had he to lament the sins of his prayers only.

We know that such a brief petition, as 'Lord

* Bishop Hall.

* 2 Chron. xx. 5, 6.

help my unbelief,' if the supplicant be in so happy a frame, and the prayer be darted up with such strong faith, that his very soul mounts with the petition, may suffice to draw down a blessing which may be withheld from the more prolix petitioner: yet if by prayer we do not mean a mere form of words, whether it be long or short; but that secret communion between God and the soul which is the very breath and being of religion; then is the Scripture so far from suggesting that short measure of which it is accused, that it expressly says, 'Pray without ceasing;'—'Pray evermore;'—'I will that men pray every where;'—'Continue instant in prayer.'

If such 'repetitions' as these objectors reprobate, stir up desires as yet unawakened, or protract affections already excited (for '*vain* repetitions' are such as awaken or express no new desire, and serve no religious purpose;) then are 'repetitions' not to be condemned. And that our Saviour did not give the warning against 'long prayers and repetitions,' in the sense these objectors allege, is evident from his own practice; for once we are told 'he continued *all night* in prayer to God.' And again, in a most awful crisis of his life, it is expressly said, 'He prayed the *third* time, using *the same words*.'

All habits gain by exercise; of course the Christian graces gain force and vigour by being called out, and, as it were, mustered in prayer. Love, faith, and trust in the Divine promises, if they were not kept alive by this stated intercourse with God, would wither and die.

CHAP. V.

Vain Excuses for the Neglect of Prayer.

THERE are not a few, who offer apologies for the neglect of spiritual duties, by saying they believe them to be right, but that they are tempted to neglect the exercise of them by idleness, or business, by company, or pleasure. This may be true, but temptations are not compulsions. The great adversary of souls may fill the fancy with alluring images of enjoyment, so as to draw us away from any duty, but it is in our own choice either to indulge, or through grace to repel them. He may act upon the passions through outward objects, which introduce them to the mind through the senses, but the grace of God enables all who faithfully ask it, to withstand them.

If we were not at liberty to reject temptation, sin would be no sin. It is the offer of the grace of resistance not used, which makes the offender to be without excuse. All the motives and the allurements to sin would be ineffectual, would we keep up in our minds what are its 'wages'—death; death spiritual, death eternal!

Of all the excuses for the neglect of prayer, the man of business justifies his omission to himself by the most plausible apologies.—Many of this class, active for themselves, and useful to the world, are far from disputing either the propriety, or the duty of prayer; they are willing however for the present, to turn over this duty to the clergy, to the idle, to women and children. They allow it to be an important thing, but not the most important. They acknowledge, if men have time to spare, they cannot spend it better; but *they* have no time. It is indeed a duty, but a duty not to be compared with that of the court, the bar, the public office, the counting-house, or the shop.

Now, in pleading for the importance of the one, we should be the last to detract from that of the other. We only plead for their entire compatability.

We pass over the instance of Daniel, a man of business and a statesman, and of many other public characters, recorded in Scripture, and confine ourselves to the example of Nehemiah. He was not only an officer in the court of the greatest king of the East, but it was his duty to be much in the royal presence. He was on a particular occasion, under deep affliction; for Jerusalem was in ruins! On a certain day his sadness was so great, as to be visible to the king, at whose table he was attending.

The monarch enquired the cause of his sorrow, and what request he had to make.—He instantly 'prayed to the God of heaven,' doubtless to strengthen him, and then made his petition to the king for no less a boon, than to allow him to rebuild the walls of the sacred city. His prayer preceded his petition. It was that prayer, which gave him courage to present that petition, and which probably induced the sovereign to grant it. What a double encouragement is here given to the courtier, both to pray to God, and to speak truth to a king!

Though the plea of the man of business, for his own particular exemption, can by no means be granted, yet it is the sense he entertains of the value of his professional duties, which deceives him. It leads him to believe, that there can be no evil in substituting business for devotion. He is conscious that he is industrious, and he knows that industry is a great moral quality. He is rightly persuaded, that the man of pleasure has no such plea to produce. He therefore imposes on himself, with the belief that there *can* be no harm in substituting a moral for a religious exercise; for he has learned to think highly of morality, while he assigns to religion only an inferior degree in his scale of duties.

He usually goes to church once on the Sunday; but it does not at all infringe on his religious system to examine his accounts, to give a great dinner, or to begin a journey on that day.

Now it is a serious truth, that there is no man to whom prayer is more imperatively a duty, or more obviously a necessity, than to the man of business; whether in the higher or the middle classes of society. There is no man who more stands in need of quieting his anxieties, regulating his tempers, cooling his spirits by a devout application, for the blessing of God; none to whom it is more necessary to implore the divine protection for the duties, or preservation from the dangers of the scene in which he is about to engage; none to whom it is more important to solicit direction in the difficulties which the day may produce; none on whom it

is more incumbent to solicit support against the temptations which may be about to assail him; none to whom the petition for an enlightened conscience, an upright intention, a sound probity, and an undeviating sincerity, is of more importance.

What is so likely as prayer to enable him to stand prepared to meet the accidental fluctuations in his affairs, to receive without inebriation, a sudden flow of prosperous fortune, or to sustain any adverse circumstances with resignation?

Even persons in more retired situations, even those who have made considerable advances in religion cannot but acknowledge how much the ordinary and necessary cares of daily life, especially, how much any unexpected accession to them, are likely to cause absence and distraction in their devotions:—how much then ought they, whose whole life is business, to be on their guard against these dangers, to double their vigilance against them, and to implore direction under them.

Were the Christian militant accustomed never to engage in the moral battle of daily life, without putting on this panoply, the shafts of temptation would strike with a feeble and erring blow; they would not so deeply pierce the guarded heart. And were fervent humble daily prayer once conscientiously adopted, its effects would reach beyond the week-day engagements. It would gradually extend its benign influence to the postponing of settling accounts, the festive dinner, and the not absolutely necessary journey, to one of those six days in which we are enjoined to labour. It would lead him to the habit of doing 'no manner of work' on that day, in which the doing of it was prohibited by the great Lawgiver in his own person.

We have more than once alluded to the diversities of character, occasional events, difference in the state of mind as well as of circumstances, which may not only render the prayer which is suitable to one man unsuitable to another, but unsuitable to the same man under every alteration of circumstances.

But among the proper topics for prayer, there is one which, being of universal interest ought not to be omitted. For by whatever dissimilarity of character, capacity, profession, station, or temper, the condition of man, and, of course, the nature of prayer, is diversified—there is one grand point of union, one circumstance, one condition, in which they must all meet; one state, of which every man is equally certain; one event which happeneth to all,—'it is appointed unto every man once to die.' The rugged road of sorrow, the flowery path of pleasure, as well as

'The paths of glory, lead but to the grave.'

In praying, therefore, against the fear of death, we do not pray against a contingent but a certain evil; we pray to be delivered from the overwhelming dread of that house which is appointed for all living—we are put in mind that all who are born must die!

'The end of all things is at hand.' To what purpose does the apostle convert this awful proclamation? Does he use it to encourage gloomy tempers, to invite to unprofitable melancholy? No: he uses the solemn admonition to stir us up to moral goodness—therefore, 'be sober'—he does more, he uses it to excite us to religious vigilance,—'and watch unto prayer.'

Prayer against the fear of death, by keeping up in us a constant remembrance of our mortality, will help to wean us from a too intimate attachment to the things we are so soon to quit. By this habitual preparation to meet our Judge, we shall be brought to pray more earnestly for an interest in the great Intercessor; and to strive more effectually against every offence which may aggravate the awfulness of that meeting.

Fervent prayer, that divine grace may prepare us for death, will, if cordially adopted, answer many great moral purposes. It will remind every individual of every class that 'the time is short'—that 'there is no repentance in the grave.'

Perhaps even the worldly and thoughtless man, under an occasional fit of dejection, or an accidental disappointment, may be brought to say, 'When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God.'—Oh, think upon Him, call upon Him, *now*,—now, when you are in prosperity; now, when your fortunes are flourishing; now, when your hill is so strong that you think it shall never be removed: think upon Him, call upon Him, when the scene is the brightest, when the world courts, flatteries invite, and pleasures betray you; think on Him, while you are able to think at all, while you possess the capacity of thinking. The time may come, when 'He may turn his face from you, and you will be troubled.' Think of God, when the alluring images of pleasure and of profit would seduce you from Him. Prosperity is the season of peculiar peril. 'It is the bright day that brings forth the adder.' Think of God when the tempting world says, 'All this I will give thee.' Trust not the insolvent world, it has cheated every creditor that ever trusted it. It will cheat you.

To the *man of opulence*, who heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them, prayer will be a constant memento: it will remind him that he walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; it will remind him of laying up treasures where thieves cannot enter, nor rust corrode.

The habit of praying against the fear of death, would check the pride of youthful *beauty*, by reminding her how soon it must say to the worm, Thou art my father, and to corruption, Thou art my mother and sister.

The *man of genius*, he who thought that of making many books there would be no end; who, in his zeal to write, had neglected to pray; who thought little of any immortality but that which was to be conferred by the applause of dying creatures like himself; who, in the vanity of possessing talents, had forgotten that he must one day account for the application of them; if happily he should be brought to see the evil of his own heart, to feel the wants of his own soul, how intense will be his repentance, how deep his remorse, that he had loved the praise of men more than the praise of God! how fervently will he pray that his mercies may not aggravate the account of his sins; that his talents may not become the instrument of his

punishment! How earnestly will he supplicate for pardon, how devoutly will he 'give glory to God, before his feet stumble on the dark mountains!'

The *man of business*, to whom we have already adverted, who thought his schemes so deeply laid, his speculations so prudently planned, that nothing could frustrate them; who calculated that the future was as much in his power as the present, forgot that death, that grand subverter of projects, might interpose his *veto*. This man, who could not find time to pray, must find time to die—he may at length find—happy if he ever find it, that he cannot meet his end with a peaceful heart, and a resigned spirit, without the preparation of prayer for support in that awful period, 'when his purposes shall be broken off and all his thoughts perish.'

The *man of pleasure*, alas! what shall we say for *him*? He is sunk to the lowest step of degradation in the moral scale; he has not even human supports; he has robbed himself even of the ordinary consolations resorted to by ordinary men. He has no stay on which to lay hold, no twig at which to catch, no pretence by which to flatter himself into a false peace; no recollection of past usefulness; he has neither served his country; nor benefited society—what shall we say for him? If he pray not for himself, we must pray for him—with God all things are possible.

The *statesman*, indefatigable in the public service, distinguished for integrity; but neglecting the offices of Christianity; whose lofty character power had not warped, nor cupidity debased, but whose religious principles, though they had never been renounced, had not been kept in exercise; a spirit of rare disinterestedness; a moralist of unblanched honour, but who pleaded that duty had left him little time for devotion! Should divine grace incline him at last to seek God, should he begin to pray to be prepared for death and judgment, he will deeply regret with the contrite cardinal, not that he served his king faithfully, but that his higher services had not been devoted to their highest object. In this frame of mind, that ambition which was satisfied with what earth could give, or kings reward, will appear no longer glorious in his eyes. True and just to his sovereign, devoted to his country, faithful to all but his Saviour and himself, he now laments that he had neglected to seek a better country, neglected to serve the King Eternal, the blessed and only Potentate; neglected to obtain an interest in a kingdom which shall not be moved, He feels that mere patriotism, grand as is its object, and important as is its end, will not afford support to a soul sinking at the approach of the inevitable hour, awed at the view of final judgment.

But these great and honourable presons are the very men to whom superior cares, and loftier duties, and higher responsibilities render prayer even more necessary, were it possible than to others. Nor does this duty trench upon other duties, for the compatabilities of prayer are universal. It is an exercise which has the property of incorporating itself with every other; not only not impeding, but advancing it. If secular thoughts and vain imaginations, often break in on our devout employments, let us allow Religion to vindicate her rights, by uniting herself with our worldly occupations. There is no crevice so small at which devotion may not slip in; in no other instance of so rich a blessing being annexed to so easy a condition; no other case in which there is any certainty, that to ask is to have. This the suitors to the great do not always find so easy from them as the great themselves may find from God.

Not only the elevation on which they stand makes this fence necessary for their personal security, by enabling them to bear the height without giddiness, but the guidance of God's hand is so essential to the operations they conduct, that the public prosperity, no less than their own safety, is involved in the practice of habitual prayer. God will be more likely to bless the hand which steers, and the head which directs, when both are ruled by the heart which prays. Happily we need not look out of our own age or nation for instances of public men, who, while they govern the country, are themselves governed by a religious principle; who petition the Almighty for direction, and praise Him for success.

The *hero*, who, in the hot engagement, surrounded with the 'pride, pomp, and circumstance of war,' bravely defied death; forgot all that was personal, and only remembered—nobly remembered, his country, and his immediate duty;—animated with the glory that was to be acquired with his arm, and almost ready to exclaim with the Roman patriot;

'——————What pity
That we can die but once to serve our country!'

yet this hero, if he had ever made a conscience of prayer, may he not hereafter find, that the most successful instrumentality is a distinct thing in itself, and will be different in its results, from personal piety? May he not find that, though he saved others, himself he cannot save?

If, however, in after-life, in the cool shade of honourable retirement, he be brought, through the grace of God, to habituate himself to earnest prayer, he will deeply regret that he ever entered the field of battle without imploring the favour of the God of battles; that he had ever returned alive from slaughtered squadrons, without adoring the Author of his providential preservation. If his penitence be sincere, his prayer will be effectual. It will fortify him under the more depressing prospect of that death which is soon to be encountered in the solitude of his darkened chamber, without witnesses, without glory, without the cheering band, without the spirit-stirring drum; without the tumultuous acclamation; with no objects to distract his attention; no conflicting concerns to divide his thoughts; no human arm, either of others or his own, on which to depend. This timely reflection, this late, though never *too* late prayer, may still prepare him for a peaceful dying-bed; may lead him to lean on a stronger arm than his own, or that of an army; may conduct him to a victory over his last enemy, and thus dispose him to meet death in a safer state than when he despised it in the field, may bring him

to acknowledge, that while he continued to live without subjection to the Captain of his salvation, though he had fought bravely, he had not yet fought the good fight.

CHAP. VI.

Characters who reject Prayer.

Among the many articles of erroneous calculation, to which so much of the sin and misery of life may be attributed, the neglect or misuse of prayer will not form the lightest. The prophet Jeremiah, in his impassioned address to the Almighty, makes no distinction between those who acknowledge no God, and those who live without prayer. 'Pour out thy fury, O Lord, upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.'*

Some duties are more incumbent on some persons, and some on others; depending on the difference of talents, wealth, leisure, learning, station, and opportunities; but the duty of prayer is of imperative obligation; it is universal, because it demands none of any of the above requisites; it demands only a willing heart, a consciousness of sin, a sense of dependence, a feeling of helplessness. Those who voluntarily neglect it, shut themselves out from the presence of their Maker. 'I know you not,' must assuredly be the sentence of exclusion on those who thus 'know not God.' Nothing, it is true, can exclude them from His inspection, but they exclude themselves from his favour.

Many nearly renounce prayer, by affecting to make it so indefinite a thing, as not to require regular exercise. Just as many, also unhallow the Sabbath, who pretend they do nothing on week-days, which they should fear to do on Sundays. The truth is, instead of sanctifying the week-days by raising them to the duties of Sunday—which is indeed impracticable, let men talk as they please,—they desecrate the Sabbath to secular purposes, and so contrive to keep no Sunday at all.

Stated seasons for indispensable employments are absolutely necessary for so desultory, so versatile a creature as man. That which is turned over to any chance-time is seldom done at all; and those who despise the recurrence of appointed times and seasons are only less censurable than those who rest in them.

Other duties and engagements have their allotted seasons; why, then, should the most important duty in which an immortal being can be employed, by being left to accident, become liable to occasional omission, liable to increasing neglect, liable to total oblivion?

All the other various works of God know their appointed times;—the seasons, the heavenly bodies, day and night, seed-time and harvest;—all set an example of undeviating regularity. Why should man, the only thinking, be the only disorderly, work of Almighty power?

But whilst we are asserting the necessity of seasons of prayer, let us not be suspected of attaching undue importance to them; for all these are but the frame work, the scaffolding, the mere mechanical and subsidiary adjuncts; they are but the preparations for Christian worship; they remind us, they intimate to us, that an important work is to be done, but are no part of the work itself.

They, therefore, who most insist on the value of stated devotions, must never lose sight of that grand, and universal prime truth, that wherever we are, still we are in God's presence; whatever we have is His gift; whatever we hope is His promise; feelings which are commensurate with all time, all places, and limited to no particular scenes or seasons.

There is in some, in many it is to be feared, a readiness to acknowledge this general doctrine, which what is miscalled natural religion teaches; but who are far from including in their system the peculiarities, the duties, the devotions of Christianity. These are decorous men of the world, who, assuming the character of philosophical liberality, value themselves on having shaken off the shackles of prejudice, superstition, and system. They acknowledge a Creator of the universe, but it is in a vague and general way. They worship a Being 'whose temple is all space;' that is, every where but in the human heart. They put him as far as possible from themselves. Believing He has no providential care of them, they feel no personal interest in Him. God and nature are with them synonymous terms. That the creation of the world was His work, they do not go the length of denying; but that its government is in His hands, is with them very problematical.

In any case, however, they are assured that a Being of such immensity requires not the littleness of superstious forms, nor the petty limitations of stated seasons, and regular devotions; that he is infinitely above attending to our paltry concerns, though God himself anticipated this objection, when he condescended to declare, 'He that offereth me thanks and praise, he honoureth me.'

One says, *he* can adore the Author of nature in the contemplation of his works; that the mountains and the fields are *his* altar for worship. Another says, that his notion of religion is to deal honestly in his commerce with the world; both insist that they can serve God any where, and every where.—We know they can, and we hope they do; but our Saviour, who knew the whole make of man, his levity, instability, and unfixedness, and who was yet no friend to the formalist or the superstitious, not only commands, at the hour of prayer, our entering into the closet, but our shutting the door, —a tacit reproof, perhaps, of the devotion of the Sadducean, as well as the publicity of the Pharisaic religion, but certainly an admonition of general obligation.

In treating of prayer, it would be a superfluous labour to address unbelievers with the same

* We have not thought it necessary to touch upon family or public worship, assuming that those who habitually observe private prayer will conscientiously attend to the more public exercises of devotion; and when it is recollected that the Divine Being, who performed a miracle to feed the multitude, that He might set an example of prayer in every possible form, previously blessed the simple but abundant meal, how shall a *dependent* creature dare omit a duty so sanctified.

arguments or persuasions which we would humbly propose to such as aver, with whatever degree of conviction, their belief in Christianity. It would be folly to address them with motives drawn from a book which they do not believe or do not read. With those who are ignorant of the first principles of religion, or those who reject them, we have no common ground on which to stand. St. Paul, with his usual discrimination, has left us an example in this as well as in all other cases. With the philosophical Athenians, he confined his reasonings to natural religion. To the Jewish king Agrippa, who 'believed the prophets,' in telling the story of his own conversion, he most judiciously introduced the great doctrines of remission of sins and justification by faith.

If the Pyrrhonist in question were to see a genuine Christian character delineated in all its dimensions, marked with its fair lineaments, and enlivened by its quickening spirit, such, for instance, as is exemplified in the character of St. Paul, he would consider it as a mere picture of the imagination; and would no more believe its reality than he believes that of Xenophon's Prince, the Stoic's Wise Man, Quintilian's Perfect Orator, or any other Platonic or Utopian representation. Or could he be brought to believe its actual existence, he would set such a man far above the necessity of prayer; he would emancipate him in his own independent worth: for how should he ever suspect that such a man would ever pray at all, much less would be in prayer more abundant, in humiliation more profound, in self-renunciation more abased?

Is it not probable that some of those inquiring minds, who adorned the Porch and the Academy, as well as the more favoured men under the old dispensation, who saw the future through the dim and distant perspective of prophecy, would have rejoiced to see the things which you see, and have not believed?

How gratefully would many of these illustrious spirits have accepted advantages which you overlook! How joyfully would they have received from Him who cannot lie the assurance, that if they would seek of Him that truth after which they 'were feeling,' they should find it! How gladly would that sublime and elegant spirit, whose favourite theme was pure spiritual love, have listened to the great apostle of love; to him who caught the flame as he leaned on the bosom of his affectionate Master!

How would this same exalted genius, who taught the immortality of the soul to the bright, yet blind Athenians,—he, whose penetrating mind rather guessed than knew what he taught,—whose keen eye caught some glimpses of a brighter state through the darkness which surrounded him,—how would he have gloried in that light and immortality which the Gospel revelation has brought to light?—but with what unspeakable rapture would he have learned that He who revealed the life could *give* it, that he who promised immortality could *bestow* it! With what obedient transport would he have heard this touching apostrophe, at once a strong reproof and a tender invitation,—'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life!'—Ye philosophising cavillers, who live in the meridian splendour of this broad day, 'how will you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?'

But if pride, the dominant intellectual sin, keeps the sceptic aloof from the humiliating duties of devotion, the habitual indulgence of the senses, in another class, proves an equal cause of alienating the heart from prayer.

The man absorbed by ease and enjoyment, and sunk in the relaxing softness of a voluptuous life, has a natural distate to every thing that stands in opposition to the delights of that life. It is the smoothness of his course which makes it so slippery. He is lost before he feels that he is sinking. For whether we plunge at once from a precipitous height, or slide down from it on an inclined plane, still, while there is a yawning gulf at the bottom, our destruction is equally inevitable.

The systematic but decorous sensualist is one whose life is a course of sober luxury, of measured indulgence. He contrives to reconcile an abandonment of sound principle with a kind of orderly practice. He inquires rather what is decent than what is right; what will secure the favourable opinion of the world, especially his own class, rather than what will please God. His object is to make the most of this world. Selfishness has established his throne in his heart. His study is to make every thing and every person subservient to his own convenience, or pleasure, or profit, yet without glaringly trespassing on the laws of propriety or custom. Self is the source and centre of all his actions; but though this governing principle is always on the watch for its gratification, yet, as part of that gratification depends on a certain degree of reputation it frequently leads him to do right things, though without right motives; for the main spring sometimes sets the right in motion as well as the wrong.

He goes to church on all public occasions, but without devotion; gives alms without charity; subscribes to public institutions without being interested in their prosperity, except as they are frequently succeeded by a pleasant dinner and good company, and as the subscription-list of names he knows will be published. He lives on good terms with different, and even opposite classes of men, without being attached to any; he does them favours with affection, knowing that he shall have occasion to solicit favours in return, for he never does a small kindness without a view to asking a greater.

He deprecates excess in every thing, but always lives upon its confines.

Prayer enters not into his plan,—he has nothing to ask, for he has all in himself,—thanksgiving is still less his practice, for what he has he deserves.

He has read that 'to enjoy is to obey,' and he is always ready to give you this cheerful proof of the most unlimited obedience. He respects the laws of the country, especially such as guard property and game, and eagerly punishes the violators of both. But as to the laws of God, he thinks they were made to guard the possessions of the rich, to punish the vicious poor, and to frighten those who have nothing to lose. Yet he respects some of the commandments, and would placard on every post and pillar that

which says, 'Thou shalt not steal;' whilst he thinks that which says, 'Thou shalt not covet,' might be expunged from the Decalogue.

If you happen to speak of the helplessness of man, he thinks you are alluding to some paralytic; if of his dependence, to some hanger-on of a great man; if of his sinfulness, he adopts your opinion, for he reads the Newgate Calender; but of sin, as an inherent principle, of the turpitude of sin, except as it disturbs society, he knows nothing; but religion as a principle of action, but prayer as a source of peace or a ground of hope, he neither knows nor desires to know. The stream of life glides smoothly on without it; why should he ruffle its placid flow? why should he break in on the course of enjoyment with self-imposed austerities? He believes himself to be respected by his fellow-men, and the favour of God is not in all his thoughts. His real character the great day of decision will discover. Till then he will have two characters.

'Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for thee,' is perhaps the state of all others which most disqualifies and unfits for prayer. Not only the apostrophe excites the bodily appetite, but the SOUL is called upon to contemplate, to repose on, the soothing prospect, the delights of that voluptuousness for which the 'much goods are laid up.'

But when the prosperous fool says, 'soul take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for thee,'—the prosperous Christian says, 'soul tremble at thine ease—be on thy guard.—Thou hast, indeed, much goods laid up for thee, but it is in a future world. Lose not a large inheritance for a paltry possession; forfeit not an unalienable reversion for a life interest,—a life which this very night may be required of thee.'

Thus we see what restrains prayer in these two classes of character. The sceptic does not pray, because he does not believe that God is a hearer of prayer. The voluptuary, because he believes that God is such a one as himself, and because he has already gotten all that he wants of Him. His gold, and the means of gratifying his sensuality, would not be augmented by the dry duties of devotion; and with an exercise which would increase neither, he can easily dispense.

CHAP. VII.

Errors in Prayer

IT has lately been observed by a distinguished Christian orator, that 'many profess to believe the Bible to be true, who do not believe the truths *in* the Bible;' so may we not say, that all desire the gifts of God, but they do not desire God. If we profess to love Him, it is for our own sake; when shall we begin to love Him for himself? Many who do not go the length of omitting prayer, but pray merely from custom, or education, frequently complain that they find no benefit from prayer; others that they experience not the support and comfort promised to it. May not those who thus complain, and who, perhaps, are far from being enemies to religion, find, on a serious examination of their own hearts and lives, some irregularity in desire to be the cause of their discontent, and alleged punishment?

We are more disposed to lay down rules for the regulation of God's government, than to submit our will to it as he has settled it. If we do not now see the efficacy of the prayer which he has enjoined us to present to him, it may yet be producing its effect in another way. Infinite wisdom is not obliged to inform us of the manner, or the time, of his operations; what he expects of us is to persevere in the duty. The very obedience to the command is no small thing, whatever be its imperceptible effects.

Under the apparent failure of our prayers, the source of our repinings must be looked for in the fact of our own blindness and imperfection; for the declarations of the Gospel are sure; their answer must be found in the grace of God in Christ Jesus, for his mercies are infallible. Wherever there is disappointment, we may be assured that it is not because he is wanting to us, but because we are wanting to ourselves.

The prophet's expression, 'the iniquity of our holy things,' will not be thoroughly understood except by those who thus seriously dive into the recesses of their own heart, feel their deficiencies, mark their wanderings, detect and lament their vain imaginations and impertinent thoughts. It is to be regretted that these worldly trifles are far more apt to intrude on us in prayer, than the devout affections excited by prayer are to follow us into the world. Business and pleasure break in on our devotions: when will the spirit of devotion mix with the concerns of the world?

You who lament the disappointment of your requests, suffer a few friendly hints.—Have you not been impatient because you receive not the things that you asked for immediately? How do you know, but that if you had persevered, God might have bestowed them? He certainly would, had He not in His wisdom foreseen they would not have been good for you; and, therefore, in His mercy withheld them. Is there not some secret, unsuspected infidelity lurking behind such impatience? Is it not virtually saying, there is no God to hear, or that he is unfaithful to his promises? For is it not absolute impiety to insinuate an accusation that the Supreme Judge of men and angels is capable of injustice, or liable to error? God has pleasure in the prosperity of His children. He neither grants nor denies any thing which is not accurately weighed and measured; which is not exactly suited to their wants, if not to their requests.

If we pray aright, it may please God, not only to grant that for which we pray, but that for which we do not pray. Supplicating for the best things as we before observed, we may receive inferior and unrequested things, as was the case with Solomon in his prayer for wisdom. God will not forget our labour of love. If he does not seem to notice it at present, he may lay it by for a time when it may be more wanted.

In prayer we must take care not to measure our necessities by our desires: the former are few, the latter may be insatiable. A murmur-

ing spirit is a probable cause why our petitions are not granted. He who murmurs, distrusts the truth of God; and from distrust to infidelity the distance is not great. The certain way to prevent our obtaining what we desire, or enjoying what we have, is to feel impatient at what we do not receive, or to make an improper use of what has been granted to our prayers.

Or you may perhaps address God with sinister and corrupt views; as if you had left his omniscience out of his attributes; as if he might be entrapped with the 'secret ambush of a specious prayer. Your design in the application of the boon you solicit may not be for his glory. It may be the prayer of ambition, cloaked under the guise of more extensive usefulness; it may be the prayer of covetousness, under the pretext of providing for your family. It may be the prayer of injustice, a petition for success in some undertaking for yourself, to the circumvention of another's fairer claim. God, in mercy to our souls, refuses the gift which would endanger them.

Thus, then, if we ask and receive not, because we ask deceitfully or blindly, we must not wonder if our prayers are not answered. Or if we obtain what we solicit, and turn it to a bad account, or to no account at all, we must not be surprised if Divine grace is withheld, or withdrawn.

The same ill results may be expected if we ask formally or carelessly. Who has not felt, that there is a kind of mechanical memory in the tongue which runs over the form, without any aid of the understanding, without any concurrence of the will, without any consent of the affections? For do we not sometimes implore God to hear a prayer, to which we ourselves are not attending? And is not this presumptuously to demand from him that attention, which we ourselves are not giving to our own requests, even while we are in the act of making them?

A mere superficial form, by lulling the conscience, hardens the heart. The task is performed; but in what manner, or to what result, is not enquired. Genuine prayer is the homage of the soul to God, and not an expedient to pacify Him.

If you observe the form, but forget the dispositions it is intended to produce, it is evident the end of such prayer is not answered. Yet be not so far discouraged by feeling no sensible effect from prayer as to discontinue it; it is still a right thing to be found in the way of duty.

But, perhaps, you neglect to implore the Spirit of Christ towards the direction of your prayers, and His intercession for their acceptance. As there is no other name through which we can be saved, so there is no other through which we can be heard: we must not sever his mediation from His atonement. All His divine offices are not only in perfect harmony, but in inseparable union.* Or, perhaps, you have used the name of the Redeemer for form's sake, or as an accustomed close to your petitions, without imploring his efficacious grace in changing your heart, as well as in pardoning your sins.

Perhaps you think it is a sufficient qualification for acceptable prayer, that you are always forming good intentions; now, though these make up the value of good actions, yet good intentions, not acted upon, when occasion invites and duty calls, will not lessen, but inflame the reckoning. For does it not look as if you had resisted the offer of that Holy Spirit, which had originally prompted the intention; and may it not induce Him to withdraw His blessed influences, when they have been both invited and rejected?

Do you never, by unwholesome reading, fill the mind with images unfavourable to serious exercises? The children of the pure and holy God should feed on the bread of their Father's house, and not on the husks of the prodigal.

Do you never use profanely or lightly that name which is above every name? He who made the ear, shall He not hear? and, if He has heard during the day His awful name used by the thoughtless as an expletive, or by the impious as an interjection, or by the presumptuous as an imprecation, will He in the morning be called on as a Saviour, and in the evening as an Intercessor?

But it cannot be too frequently repeated, that no profession of faith, however orthodox; no avowal of trust in Christ, however confident; no entreaty for the aid of the Spirit, however customary, will avail, if it be not such an influential faith, such a practical trust, such a living devotedness, as shall be productive of holiness of heart and life, as shall tend to produce obedience to the commands, and submission to the will of God. This is an infallible test, by which you may try every doctrine, every principle of the Gospel. We do not mean the truth of them, for that is immutable; but your own actual belief, your own actual interest in them. If no such effects are visible, we deceive ourselves, and the principles we profess are not those by which we are governed.

Prayer is so obviously designed to humble the proud heart of the natural man, by giving him a feeling sense of his misery, his indigence, and his helplessness, that we should be unwilling to believe, that even the proudest man can carry his pride to the Throne of Grace, except to supplicate deliverance from it: yet such a character is actually drawn by Him who knew the thoughts and intents of the heart of man; and a long consideration will teach us, that the 'two men who went up into the temple to pray' were not intended as individual portraits, but as specimens of a class.

The proud man does not, perhaps, always thank God that he is not guilty of adultery or extortion, to which vices he may have little temptation; nor does he glory in paying tithe and taxes, to which the law would compel him Yet is he never disposed, like the Pharisee, to proclaim the catalogue of his own virtues? to bring in his comparative claims, as if it were a good thing to be better than the bad? Is he never disposed to carry in his eye, (as if he would remind his Maker of his superiority,) certain persons who are possibly less the objects of Di-

* We observe with regret, that, in many public forms of prayer, the aid of his mediation is much more frequently implored, than the benefits of his death and merits. He is, indeed, our divine Intercessor, but his mere intercession is not the whole source of our dependence on Him.

vine displeasure than he, by his pride and selfishness, may have rendered himself; although his regularity in the forms of devotion may have made him more respectable in the world, than the poor reprobated being whom he praises God he does not resemble? It is the lowly abasement, the touching self-condemnation, the avowed poverty, the pleaded misery, of the destitute beggar that finds acceptance. It is the hungry whom God's mercy fills with good things, it is the rich in his own conceit whom His displeasure sends away empty.

Whenever you are tempted to thank God that you are not like other men, let it be in comparing your own condition with that of the afflicted and bereaved among your own friends; compare yourself with the paralytic on his couch; with the blind beggar by the way-side; with the labourer in the mine; think on the wretch in the galleys; on the condemned in the dungeons of despotic governments. Above all, think, and this is the intolerable *acme* of sin in the inflictor, and of misery in the sufferer,—think on the wretched negro chained in the hold of a slave-ship! Think seriously on these, and put pride into your prayer if you can.—Think on these, not to triumph in your own superiority, but to adore the undeserved mercy of God, in giving you blessings to which you have no higher claim, and let your praise of yourself be converted into prayer for them.

For there are no dispositions of the heart which are more eminently promoted by prayer than contentment and patience. They are two qualities of the same colour, but of different shades, and are generally, when found at all, found in the same breast. Both are the offspring of genuine religion, both nurtured by cordial prayer. The cultivation of the one, under easy circumstances, prepares for the exercise of the other in more trying situations. Both emanate from the same Divine principle, but are drawn out by different occasions and exercised under varying circumstances.

Content is the tranquillity of the heart, prayer is its aliment: it is satisfied under every dispensation of Providence, and takes thankfully its allotted portion, never inquiring whether a little more would not be a little better; knowing that if God had so judged, it would have been as easy for him to have given the more as the less. That is not true content, which does not enjoy as the gift of Infinite Wisdom what it has, nor is that true patience, which does not suffer meekly the loss of what it had, because it is not His will that it should have it longer. The language of the patient man under trials is, It is the Lord. Shall a living man complain? is his interrogation. 'A good man,' says Solomon, 'is satisfied from himself.' Here the presumptuous might put in *his* claim to the title. But his pretension arises from his mistake, for his satisfaction is *with himself*, that of the Christian with Providence; it arises from the grace of God shed abroad in his heart, which is become a perennial spring of consolation and enjoyment; and which by persevering prayer, is indented into his very soul. Content knows how to want and how to abound; this is the language of equanimity: 'Shall I not receive evil from the hand of the Lord, as well as good?' —This is the language of patience. Content is always praising God for what she possesses; patience is always justifying him for what she suffers. The cultivation of the one effectually prepares us for the exercise of the other. But these dispositions are not inherent in the human heart. How are they generated? By the influences of the Holy Spirit. How are they kept alive? By heart felt devotion.

Perhaps the impediment which hinders the benefit of prayer in characters apparently correct, may be the fatal habit of indulging in some secret sin, the private cherishing of some wrong propensity, the fondly entertaining of some evil imagination. Not being accustomed to controul at other times, it intrudes when you would willingly expel it; for a guest which is unreservedly let in at other seasons, and cordially entertained, will too frequently break in when you desire to be alone.

The Scriptures are explicit on this subject. It is not merely the committing actual sin that ruins the comfort growing out of prayer; the Divine prohibition runs higher; its interdiction is more intimately interior; it extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The door of heaven is shut against prayer under such circumstances. 'If I regard iniquity in my *heart*, the Lord will not hear me.' A cherished corruption in the mind is more likely to interpose between God and the soul, because it does not assume the shape and bulk of crime. A practical offence, the effect of sudden temptation, is more likely to be followed by keen repentance, deep self-abasement, and fervent application for pardon; whereas to the close bosom-sin, knowing that no human charge can be brought against it, the soul secretly returns with a fondness facilitated by long indulgence, and only whetted by a short separation.

It was, perhaps, this acute experimental feeling which led David to pray to be delivered from 'secret sins;' these, he was probably conscious had led to those 'presumptuous sins,' which had entangled his soul and embittered his life; and whose dominion he so frequently and fervently deprecates. This, it is to be feared, may be the case with some, whose language and exterior cause them to be ranked with the religious; these are, at least, the dangers to which they are most exposed. It is, therefore, that our Lord connects, in indissoluble union, watching with prayer.

Perhaps when the conscience is more than usually awakened, you pray with some degree of fervour to be delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin. But if you stop here your devotion is most imperfect. If you do not also pray to be delivered from its power and dominion over your heart and life, you do not go much farther than the heathens of old. They seem to have had a strong feeling of guilt, by their fond desire of expiating it by their sacrifices and lustrations.

But such is the love of present ease, and the desire of respite, that you think, perhaps, it is better not 'to be tormented before the time.' How many now in a state of irreversible misery wish they had been tormented sooner, that they

might not be tormented forever! But with you it is not yet too late. With you the day of grace, which to them is over, is not yet past. Use it, then, without delay, instead of persisting in laying up fresh regrets for eternity.

But too many deceive themselves, by imagining, that when they have pronounced their prayer the duty is accomplished with the task; the occult medicine being taken, the charm is to work of itself. They consider it as a duty quite distinct and unconnected with any other. They forget that it is to produce in them a principle which is to mix with all the occurences of the day. Prayer, though not intended as a talisman, is yet proposed as a remedy. The effect of its operation is to be seen in subduing the passions, assisting to govern the temper, in bridling the tongue, in checking not only calumny, but levity; not only impure, but vain conversation.

But we have a wonderful talent at deceiving ourselves. We have not a fault for which we do not find an apology. Our ingenuity on this head is inexhaustible. In matters of religion men complain that they are weak; a complaint they are not forward to urge in worldly matters. They lament that their reluctance to pray arises from being unable to do what God, in his word, expects them to do. But is not this virtual rebellion, only with a smooth face and a soft name? God is too wise not to know exactly what we *can* do, and too just to expect from us what we *cannot*.

This pretence of weakness, though it looks like humility, is only a mask for indolence, and a screen for selfishness.

We certainly *can* refuse to indulge ourselves in what pleases us, when we know it displeases God. We *can* obey his commandments with the aid of the infused strength which He has promised, and which we *can* ask. It is not He who is unwilling to give, but we who are averse to pray. The temptations to vice are strengthened by our passions, as our motives to virtue are weakened by them.

Our great spiritual enemy would not be so potent, if we ourselves did not put arms into his hands. The world would not be so powerful an enchantress, if we did not assist the enchantment, by voluntarily yielding to it; by insensibly forsaking him who is our strength. We make apologies for yielding to both by pleading their power and our own weakness. But the inability to resist is of our own making. Both enemies are indeed powerful, but they are not irresistible. If we assert the contrary, is it not virtually saying 'Greater are they that are against us than He that is for us?'

But we are traitors to our own cause: we are conquered by our own consent; we surrender not so much because the conqueror is powerful, as because the conquered is willing.

Without diminishing any thing of *His* grace and glory to whom every good thought we think, every victory over sin we obtain, is owing, may it not add to our happiness, even in heaven, to look back on every conquest we here obtained by prayer over our grand spiritual enemy, every triumph over the world, every victory over ourselves? Will not the remembrance of one act of resistance then, far surpass every gratification now, which the three confederate enemies of our souls may present to us?

It is not merely by our prayers that we must give glory to God. Our Divine Master has expressly told us wherein His Father is glorified; it is 'when we bring forth much fruit.' It is by our works we shall be judged, and not by our prayers. And what a final consummation is it that obedience to the will of God, which is our duty here, shall be our nature hereafter! What is now our prayer shall then be our possession; there the obligation to obey shall become a necessity, and that necessity shall be happiness ineffable.

The various evils here enumerated, with many others not touched upon, are so many dead weights on the wings of prayer; they cause it to gravitate to earth, obstruct its ascent, and hinder it from piercing to the throne of God.

The Lord's Prayer.

CHAP. VIII.

It is not customary for kings to draw up petitions for their subjects to present to themselves; much less do earthly monarchs consider the act of petitioning worthy of reward, nor do they number the petitions so much among the services done them, as among the burthens imposed on them. Whereas it is a singular benefit to our fallen race that the King of kings both dictates our petitions, and has promised to recompense us for making them.

In the Lord's prayer may be found the seminal principle of all the petitions of a Christian, both for spiritual and temporal things; and however in the fulness of his heart he will necessarily depart from his model in his choice of expressions: into whatever lamina he may expand the pure gold of which it is composed, yet he will still find the general principle of his own more enlarged application to God, substantially contained in this brief but finished compendium.

Is it not a striking proof of the divine condescension, that knowing our propensity to err, our blessed Lord should himself have dictated our petitions, partly perhaps as a corrective of existing superstitions, but certainly to leave behind Him a *regulator* by which all future ages should *set* their devotions; and we might perhaps establish it as a safe rule for prayer in general, that any petition which cannot in some shape, be accommodated to the spirit of some part of the Lord's prayer may not be right to be adopted.

The distinction between the personal nature of Faith, and the universal character of Charity, as it is exercised in prayer, is specifically exhibited in the two pronouns which stand at the head of the Creed and of the Lord's Prayer. We cannot exercise faith for another, and therefore can only say *I* believe. But when we offer up our petitions, we address them to *our* Father, implying that he is the Author, Governor, and Supporter, not of ourselves only, but of his whole

rational creation. It conveys also a beautiful idea of that boundless charity which links all mankind in one comprehensive brotherhood. The plural *us*, continued through the whole prayer, keeps up the sentiment with which it sets out, tends to exclude selfishness, and to excite philanthropy, by recommending to God the temporal as well as spiritual wants of the whole family of mankind.

The nomenclature of the Divinity is expressed in Scripture by every term which can convey ideas of grandeur or of grace, of power or of affection, of sublimity or tenderness, of majesty or benignity; by every name which can excite terror or trust, which can inspire awe or consolation.

But of all compellations by which the Supreme Being is designated in his holy word, there is not one so soothing so attractive, so interesting, as that of FATHER; it includes the idea of reconcilement, pardon, acceptance, love. It swallows up his grandeur in His beneficence. It involves, also, the inheritance belonging to our filial relation. It fills the mind with every image that is touching, and the heart with every feeling that is affectionate. It inspires fear softened by love, and exhibits authority mitigated by tenderness. The most endearing image the Psalmist could select from the abundant store-house of his rich conceptions, to convey the kindest sentiment of God's pity towards them that fear Him, was that it resembles the pity of a 'father for his *own children*.' In directing us to pray to our Father, our Divine Master does not give the command without the example. He every where uses the term he recommends. 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth!' And in the 17th of St. John he uses this tender name no less than seven times.

'Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us,' was the ill-understood prayer of the inquiring disciples. To us this petition is granted before it is made. Does he not show himself to all as a Father, in the wonders of his creation, in the wonders of our being, preservation, and support? Has He not, in a more especial manner revealed Himself to us as a Father in the sublime wonder of His word, in the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the perpetual gift of the Holy Spirit? Does He not show Himself our Father, if, when we have done evil, He withholds His chastening hand; if, when we have sinned, He still bears with us; if, when we are deaf to His call, He repeats it; if, when we delay, He waits for us; if, when we repent, He pardons us; if, when we return, He receives us; if, when in danger, He preserves us from falling; and if, when we fall, He raises us?

We have a beautiful illustration of the goodness of God as a merciful and tender Father in the deeply affecting parable of the Prodigal Son. Though the undone spendthrift knew that he had no possible claim on the goodness he had so notoriously offended, yet he felt that the endearing name of Father had an eloquence that might plead for forgiveness of his offence, though he feared, not for restoration to affection and favour. But while he only meekly aspired to a place among the servants, while he only humbly pleaded for a little of their redundant bread, he was received as a pardoned, reconciled, beloved child.

Our Lord's Introduction, 'Pray ye therefore after this *manner*,' neither forbids digression nor amplification. The recollection that His dwelling-place is in Heaven, is calculated to remind us of the immeasurable distance between the petitioner and his God, and to encourage us to communicate with the Father of Spirits: with Him who is 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders;' and which of His wonders is more astonishing than this inconceivably marvellous condescension?

Christianity, we must repeat, is a practical religion, and in order to use aright the prayer our Lord has given us, we must model our life by it as well as our petitions.

If we pray that the name of God may be hallowed, yet neglect to hallow it ourselves, by family as well as personal devotion, and a conscientious attendance on all the ordinances of public worship, we defeat the end of our praying, by falling short of its obligation.

The discrepancies between our prayers and our practice do not end here. How frequently are we solemnly imploring of God, that 'His kingdom may come,' while we are doing nothing to promote his kingdom of grace here, and consequently His kingdom of glory hereafter.

If we pray that God would 'give His Son the heathen for His inheritance,' and yet make it a matter of indifference, whether a vast proportion of the globe should live heathens or die Christians; if we pray that 'the knowledge of the Lord may cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea,' yet act as if we were indifferent whether Christianity ended as well as began at home. If we pray that 'the sound may go out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world,' and yet are satisfied to keep the sound within our own hearing, and the words within our own island, is not this a prayer which goeth out of feigned lips? When we pray that 'His will may be done,' we know that His will is, that 'all should be saved, that no one should perish.' When, therefore, we assist in sending the Gospel to the dark and distant corners of the earth, then, and not till then, may we consistently desire of God in our prayers, that 'His saving health may be known to all nations.'

In praying, therefore, that 'His kingdom may come, do we not pray that all false religions, all idolatrous worship may be universally abolished, and the kingdom of Messiah be established throughout the world?

If praying for our 'daily bread' is a petition expressing our dependence, it is also a petition of temperance. It teaches us to subordinate our desires after worldly things, and to ask for them in great moderation. It is worth observing, that requests for temporal blessings and spiritual mercies are so interwoven in this perfect form, that in repeating it, we cannot pray for our 'daily bread' without imploring 'forgiveness of our trespasses.'

'Deliverance from evil' is a petition of indefinite extent, and is closely connected with that which precedes it. God cannot 'lead us into

temptation,' but His Providence may lead us into situations which, acting on the corruption of our hearts, may eventually produce the evil we deprecate.

When we pray, therefore, not to be 'led into temptation,' we are asking of God to cure those sinful propensities which are likely to expose us to it, and to preserve us from those circumstances which, by subjecting us to difficulty and danger, may terminate in sin.

Temptation, in the language of Scripture, frequently implies probation; a trial sent in order to lay open our real character. Thus God, in tempting Abraham, gave occasion to that illustrious exemplification of faith and obedience in this devoted Patriarch. God is also said to try Hezekiah. This trial led him into the vain display of magnificence and wealth before the foreign ambassadors. The Searcher of hearts already knew this infirmity, yet it is said by the sacred historian, that 'God left him to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart.' Doubtless the public exposure of his pride was calculated to lead Hezekiah to subsequent repentance and humility; for, in spite of this error he was eminently conspicuous among the awfully few pious kings of Judah.

There is in the Lord's prayer a concatenation of the several clauses, what in human composition the critics call concealed method. The petitions rise out of each other. Every part also is, as it were, fenced round, the whole meeting in a circle; for the desire that God's name may be hallowed, His will be done, and His kingdom come, with which the prayer opens, is referred to, and confirmed by the ascription at the close. If the kingdom, the power, and the glory, are His, then his ability to do and to give, is declared to be infinite.

CHAP. IX.

The Lord's Prayer continued.—'Thy Will be Done.'

The Holy Scriptures frequently comprise the essence of the Christian temper in some short aphorism, apostrophe or definition. The essential spirit of the Christian life may be said to be included in this one brief petition of the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy will be done.'

There is a haughty spirit which, though it will not complain, does not care to submit. It arrogates to itself the dignity of enduring, without any claim to the meekness of yielding. Its silence is stubbornness, its fortitude is pride; its calmness is apathy without, and discontent within. In such characters it is not so much the will of God, which is the rule of conduct, as the scorn of pusillanimity. Not seldom, indeed, the mind puts in a claim for a merit to which the nerves could make out a better title. Yet the suffering which arises from acute feeling is so far from deducting from the virtue of resignation, that when it does not impede the sacrifice it enhances the value. True resignation is the hardest lesson in the whole school of Christ. It is the oftenest taught and the latest learnt. It is not a task which, when once got over in some particular instance, leaves us master of the subject. The necessity of following up the lesson we have begun, presents itself almost every day in some new shape, occurs under some fresh modification. The submission of yesterday does not exonerate us from the resignation of to-day. The principle, indeed, once thoroughly wrought into the soul, gradually reconciles us to the frequent demand for its exercise, and renders every successive call more easy.

We read dissertations on this subject, not only with the most entire concurrence of the judgment, but with the most apparent conviction of the mind. We write essays upon it in the hour of peace and composure, and fancy that what we have discussed with so much ease and self-complacence, in favour of which we offer so many arguments to convince and so many motives to persuade, cannot be very difficult to practise. But to convince the understanding and to correct the will is a very different undertaking; and not less difficult when it comes to our own case than it was in the case of those for whom we have been so coolly and dogmatically prescribing. It is not till we practically find how slowly our own arguments produce any effect on ourselves that we cease to marvel at their inefficacy on others. The sick physician tastes with disgust the bitterness of the draught, to the swallowing of which he wondered the patient had felt so much repugnance; and the reader is sometimes convinced by the arguments which fail of their effect on the writer, when he is called, not to discuss but to act, not to reason but to suffer. The theory is so just, and the duty so obvious, that even bad men assent to it; the exercise so trying that the best men find it more easy to commend the rule than to adopt it. But he who has once gotten engraved, not in his memory but in his heart, this divine precept, Thy will be done, has made a proficiency which will render all subsequent instruction comparatively easy.

Though sacrifices and oblations were offered to God under the law by His own express appointment, yet he peremptorily rejected them by his prophets, when presented as substitutes instead of signs. Will He, under a more perfect dispensation, accept of any observances which are meant to supersede internal dedication,—of any offerings unaccompanied by complete desire of acquiescence in his will? 'My son give me thine *heart*,' is his brief but imperative command. But, before we can be brought to comply with the spirit of this requisition, God must enlighten our understanding, that our devotion may be rational; He must rectify our will, that it may be voluntary; He must purify our heart, that it may be spiritual.

Submission is a duty of such high and holy import that it can only be learnt of the Great Teacher. If it could have been acquired by mere moral institution, the wise sayings of the ancient philosophers would have taught it. But their most elevated standard was low: their strongest motives were the brevity of life, the instability of fortune, the dignity of suffering virtue, things within their narrow sphere of

judging; things true, indeed, as far as they go, but a substratum by no means equal to the superstructure to be built on it. It wanted depth, and strength, and solidity, for the purposes of support. It wanted the only true basis, the assurance that God orders all things according to the purposes of his will for our final good; it wanted that only sure ground of faith by which the genuine Christian cheerfully submits in entire dependence on the promises of the Gospel.

Nor let us fancy that we are to be languid and inactive recipients of the Divine dispensations. Our own souls must be enlarged, our own views must be ennobled, our own spirit must be dilated. An inoperative acquiescence is not all that is required of us;—and, if we must not slacken our zeal in doing good, so we must not be remiss in opposing evil, on the flimsy ground that God has permitted evil to infest the world. If it be his will to permit sin, it is an opposition to his will when we do not labour to counteract it. This surrender, therefore, of our will to that of God, takes in a large sweep of actual duties, as well as the whole compass of passive obedience. It involves doing as well as suffering, activity as well as acquiescence, zeal as well as forbearance. Yet the concise petition daily slips off the tongue without our reflecting on the weight of the obligation we are imposing on ourselves. We do not consider the extent and consequences of the prayer we are offering, the sacrifices, the trials, the privations it may involve, and the large indefinite obedience to all the known and unknown purpose of Infinite Wisdom to which we are pledging ourselves.

There is no case in which we more shelter ourselves in generalities. Verbal sacrifices cost little, cost nothing. The familiar habit of repeating the petition almost tempts us to fancy that the duty is as easy as the request is short. We are ready to think that a prayer rounded off in four monosyllables can scarcely involve duties co-extensive with our whole course of being; that, in uttering them we renounce all right in ourselves; that we acknowledge the universal indefeasible title of *the blessed and only Potentate;* that we make over to Him the right to do in us, and with us, and by us, whatever he sees good for ourselves, whatever will promote His glory, though by means sometimes as incomprehensible to our understanding, as unacceptable to our will, because we neither know the motive, nor perceive the end. These simple words, THY WILL BE DONE, express an act of faith the most sublime, an act of allegiance the most unqualified; and, while they make a declaration of entire submission to a sovereign the most absolute, they are at the same time, a recognition of love to a Father the most beneficent.

We must remember, that in offering this prayer, we may, by our own request, be offering to resign what we most dread to lose, to give up what is dear to us as our own soul; we may be calling on our heavenly Father to withhold what we are most anxiously labouring to attain, and to withdraw what we are most sedulously endeavouring to keep. We are solemnly renouncing our property in ourselves, we are distinctly making ourselves over again to Him whose we already are. We specifically entreat Him to do with us what He pleases, to mould us to a conformity to His image, without which we shall never be resigned to his will; in short, to dispose of us as His infinite wisdom sees best, however contrary to the scheme which our blindness has laid down as the path to unquestionable happiness.

To render this trying petition easy to us, is one great reason why God, by such a variety of providences, afflicts and brings us low. He knows that we want incentives to humility, even more than incitements to virtuous actions. He shows us in many ways, that self-sufficiency and happiness are incompatible; that pride and peace are irreconcilable; that following our own way, and doing our own will, which we conceive to be the very essence of felicity, is in direct opposition to it.

Under the pressure of any affliction, *Thy will be done*, as it is the patient Christian's unceasing prayer, so it is the ground of his unvarying practice. In this brief petition he finds his whole duty comprised and expressed. It is the unprompted request of his lips, it is the motto inscribed on his heart, it is the principle which regulates his life, it is the voice which says to the stormy passions, 'Peace! be still!' Let others expostulate, he submits. Nay, even submission does not adequately express his feelings. We frequently submit, not so much from duty as from necessity; we submit, because we cannot help ourselves. Resignation sometimes may be mere acquiescence in the sovereignty, rather than conviction of the wisdom and goodness of God; while the patient Christian not only yields to the dispensation, but adores the dispenser. He not only submits to the blow, but vindicates the hand which inflicts it: 'The Lord is righteous in all his ways.' He refers to the chastisement as a proof of the affection of the chastiser. 'I know that in very faithfulness thou hast caused me to be afflicted. He recurs to the thoughtlessness of his former prosperity. 'Before I was afflicted I went astray,' and alludes to the trial less as a punishment than a paternal correction. If he prays for a removal of the present suffering, he prays also that it may not be removed from him, till it has been sanctified to him. He will not even part from the trial till he has laid hold on the benefit.

'Christianity,' says Bishop Horsley, 'involves many paradoxes, but no contradictions.' To be able to say with entire surrender of the heart, 'Thy will be done,' is the true liberty of the children of God, that liberty with which Christ has made us free. It is a liberty, not which delivers us from restraint, but which, freeing us from our subjection to the senses, makes us find no pleasure but in order, no safety but in the obedience of an intelligent being to his rightful Lord. In delivering us from the heavy bondage of sin, it transfers us to the 'easy yoke of Christ,' from the galling slavery of the world to the 'light burden of him who overcame it.'

This liberty, in giving a true direction to the affections, gives them amplitude as well as elevation. The more unconstrained the will becomes, the more it fixes on one object; once fixed on the highest, it does not use its liberty

for versatility, but for constancy; not for change, but fidelity; not for wavering, but adherence.

It is, therefore, no less our interest than our duty, to keep the mind in an habitual posture of submission. 'Adam,' says Dr. Hammond, 'after his expulsion, was a greater slave in the wilderness than he had been in the inclosure.' If the barbarian ambassador came expressly to the Romans to negotiate from his country for permission to be their servants, declaring that a voluntary submission even to a foreign power, was preferable to a wild and disorderly freedom, well may the Christian triumph in the peace and security to be attained by a complete subjugation to Him who is emphatically called *the God of order.*

A vital faith manifests itself in vital acts.—'Thy will be done,' is eminently a practical petition. The first indication of the gaoler's change of heart was a practical indication. He did not ask, 'Are there few that be saved?' but 'What shall *I* do to be saved?'—The first symptom St. Paul gave of his conversion was a practical symptom: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to *do?*' He entered on his new course, with a total renunciation of his own will. It seemed to this great Apostle to be the turning point between infidelity and piety, whether he should follow his own will or the will of God. He did not amuse his curiosity with speculative questions. His own immediate and grand concern engrossed his whole soul. Nor was his question a mere hasty effusion, an interrogative springing out of that mixed feeling of awe and wonder which accompanied his first overwhelming convictions. It became the abiding principle which governed his future life, which made him in labours more abundant. Every successive act of duty, every future sacrifice of ease, sprung from it, was influenced by it. His own will, his ardent, impetuous, fiery will, was not merely subdued, it was extinguished. His powerful mind indeed lost none of its energy, but his proud heart relinquished all its independence.

We allow and adopt the term *devotion* as an indispensable part of religion, because it is supposed to be limited to the act; but *devotedness*, from which it is derived, does not meet with such ready acceptation, because this is a habit, and a habit involves more than an act; it pledges us to consistency, it implies fixedness of character, a general confirmed state of mind, a giving up what we are, and have, and do, to God. Devotedness does not consist in the length of our prayers, nor in the number of our good works, for, though these are the surest evidences of piety, they are not its essence.—Devotedness consists in doing and suffering, bearing and forbearing, in the way which God prescribes. The most inconsiderable duty performed with alacrity, if it opposes our own inclination; the most ordinary trial, met with a right spirit is more acceptable to Him than a greater effort of our own devising. We do not commend a servant for his activity, if ever so fervently exercised, in doing whatever gratifies his own fancy; we do not consider his performance as obedience, unless his activity has been exercised in doing what we required of him. Now, how can we insist on his doing what contradicts his own humour, while we allow ourselves to feel repugnance in serving our heavenly Master, when His commands do not exactly fall in with our own inclination?

Nothing short, then, of this sincere devotedness to God can enable us to maintain an equality of mind under unequal circumstances. We murmur that we have not the things we ask amiss, not knowing that they are withheld by the same mercy by which the things that are good for us are granted.—Things good in themselves may not be good for us. A resigned spirit is the proper disposition to prepare us for receiving mercies, or for having them denied. Resignation of soul, like the allegiance of a good subject, is always in readiness, though not always in action; whereas an impatient mind is a spirit of disaffection, always prepared to revolt when the will of the sovereign is in opposition to that of the subject. This seditious principle is the infallible characteristic of an unrenewed mind.

We must also give God leave, not only to take His own way, but His own time. The appointment of seasons, as well as of events, is His. 'He waits to be gracious.' If he delays, it is because we are not yet brought to that state which fits us for the grant of our request. It is not He who must be brought about, but we ourselves. Or, perhaps, He refuses the thing we ask, in order to give us a better. We implore success in an undertaking, instead of which, He gives us content under the disappointment. We ask for the removal of pain; He gives us patience under it. We desire deliverance from our enemies: he sees that we have not yet turned their enmity to our improvement, and he will bring us to a better temper, by further exercise. We desire him to avert some impending trial; instead of averting it, he takes away its bitterness; he mitigates what we believed would be intolerable, by giving us a right temper under it. How, then, can we say he has failed of his promise, if he gives something more truly valuable than we had requested at his hands?

A sincere love of God will make us thankful when our prayers are granted, and patient and cheerful when they are denied. Every fresh disappointment will teach us to distrust ourselves, and confide in God. Experience will instruct us that there may be a better way of hearing our requests than that of granting them. Happy for us that He to whom they are addressed knows what is best and acts upon that knowledge.

CHAP. X.

A slight scheme of Prayer proposed for young persons on the model of the Lord's Prayer.

WILL the pious mother pardon the liberty here taken of suggesting the few following hints? Those who are aware of the inestimable value of prayer themselves, will naturally be anxious, not only that this duty should be earnestly inculcated on their children, but that they should be taught it in the best manner; and

such parents need little persuasion or counsel on the subject. Yet children of decent and orderly (I will not say of strictly religious) families are often so superficially instructed in this important business, that when they are asked what prayers they use, it is not unusual for them to answer, 'The Lord's Prayer and the *Creed*.' And even some who are better taught, are not always made to understand with sufficient clearness the specific distinction between the two, that the one is the confession of their *faith*, and the other the model for their *supplications*. By this confused and indistinct beginning, they set out with a perplexity in their ideas, which is not always completely disentangled in more advanced life.

An intelligent mother will seize the first occasion which the child's opening understanding shall allow, for making a little course of lectures on the Lord's Prayer, taking every division or short sentence separately; for each furnishes valuable materials for a distinct lecture. Children should be led gradually through every part of this Divine composition; they should be taught to break it into regular divisions into which, indeed, it so naturally resolves itself. They should be made to comprehend, one by one, each of its short but weighty sentences: to amplify and spread them out for the purpose of better understanding them, not in their most extensive and critical sense, but in their most simple and obvious meanings; for in these condensed and substantial expressions, as we have before observed, every word is an ingot, and will bear beating out; so that the teacher's difficulty will not so much be what she shall say, as what she shall suppress; so abundant is the expository matter which this succinct pattern suggests.

When children have acquired a pretty good conception of the meaning of each division, they should then be made to observe the connection, relation, and dependence of the several parts of this Prayer, one upon another; for there is great method and connection in it. A judicious interpreter will observe how logically and consequently one clause grows out of another, though she will use neither the word logically nor consequence; for all explanations should be made in the most plain and familiar terms, it being words, and not things which commonly perplex children, if, as it sometimes happens, the teacher, though not wanting sense, wants perspicuity and simplicity.

Young persons, from being completely instructed in this short composition, (which, as it is to be their guide and model through life, too much pains cannot be bestowed on it,) will have a clear conception, not only of its individual contents, but of Prayer in general, than many ever attain, though their memory has been, perhaps, loaded with long and unexplained forms, which they have been accustomed to swallow in the lump, without scrutiny and without discrimination.

I would have it understood, that by these little comments I do not mean that children should be put to learn dry, and, to them, unintelligible expositions; but that the exposition is to be colloquial. And here I must remark in general, that the teacher is sometimes unreasonably apt to relieve herself at the child's expense, by loading the *memory* of a little creature on occasions in which far other faculties should be put in exercise. Children themselves should be made to furnish a good part of this extemporaneous commentary by their answers; in which answers they will be much assisted by the judgment the teacher uses in her manner of questioning. And the youthful understanding, when its powers are properly set at work, will soon strengthen by exercise, so as to furnish reasonable, if not very correct, answers.

Written forms of prayer are not only useful and proper, but indispensably necessary to begin with. But I will hazard the remark, that if children are thrown *exclusively* on the best forms, if they are made to commit them to memory like a copy of verses, and to repeat them in a dry customary way, they will produce little effect on their minds. They will not understand what they repeat, if we do not early open to them the important *scheme* of prayer. Without such an elementary introduction to this duty, they will afterwards be either ignorant, or enthusiastic in both. We should give them *knowledge* before we can expect them to make much progress in *piety*, and as a due preparative to it: Christian instruction in this resembling the sun, who, in the course of his communication, gives light before he gives heat. And to labour to excite a spirit of devotion without first infusing that knowledge out of which it is to grow, is practically reviving the popish maxim, that ignorance is the mother of Devotion, and virtually adopting the popish rule, of praying in an unknown tongue.

Children, let me again observe, will not attend to their prayers if they do not understand them; and they will not understand them, if they are not taught to analyse, to dissect them, to know their component parts, and to methodise them.

It is not enough to teach them to consider prayer under the general idea that it is an application to God for what they want, and an acknowledgment to Him for what they have. This, though true in the gross, is not sufficiently precise and correct. They should learn to define and to arrange all the different parts of prayer. And as a preparative to prayer itself, they should be impressed with as clear an idea as their capacity and the nature of the subject will admit, of 'HIM with whom they have to do.' His omnipresence is, perhaps, of all his attributes, that of which we may make the first practical use. Every head of prayer is founded on some great Scriptural truths, which truths the little analysis here suggested will materially assist to fix in their minds.

On the knowledge that 'God is,' that he is an infinitely holy Being, and that 'he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him,' will be grounded the first part of prayer, which is *adoration*. The creature devoting itself to the Creator, or *self-dedication* next presents itself. And if they are first taught that important truth, that as needy creatures they want help, which may be done by some easy analogy, they will easily be led to understand how na-

turally *petition* forms a most considerable branch of prayer; and Divine grace being among the things for which they are to petition, this naturally suggests to the mind the doctrine of the influences of the Holy Spirit. And when to this is added the conviction which will be readily worked into an ingenuous mind that as offending creatures they want pardon, the necessity of *confession* will easily be made intelligible to them. But they should be brought to understand that it must not be such a general and vague confession as awakens no sense of personal humiliation, as excites no recollection of their own more peculiar and individual faults. But it must be a confession founded on self-knowledge, which is itself to arise out of the practice of self-examination. On the gladness of heart natural to youth, it will be less difficult to impress the delightful duty of *thanksgiving*, which forms so considerable a branch of prayer. In this they should be habituated to recapitulate not only their general, but to enumerate their peculiar, daily, and incidental mercies, in the same specific manner as they should have been taught to detail their individual and personal *wants* in the petitionary, and their *faults* in the confessional part. The same warmth of feeling which will more readily dispose them to express their gratitude to God in thanksgiving, will also lead them more gladly to express their love to their parents and friends, by adopting another indispensable, and to an affectionate heart, pleasing part of prayer, which is *intercession*. It will be needful to inform them that the omission of this important clause in the *Lord's Prayer*, arises from the Divine Intercessor not having then assumed his mediatorial office.

When they have been made, by a plain and perspicuous mode of instruction, fully to understand the different nature of all these; and when they clearly comprehend that *adoration*, *self-dedication*, *confession*, *petition*, *thanksgiving*, and *intercession*, are distinct heads, which must not be involved in each other; you may exemplify the rules by pointing out to them these successive branches in any well written form. It is hardly needful to remind the teacher that our truly Scriptural Liturgy invariably furnishes the example of presenting *every* request in the name of the great Mediator. For there is no access to the Throne of Grace, but by *that new and living way*. In the Liturgy, too, they will meet with the best exemplifications of prayers, exhibiting separate specimens of each of the distinct heads we have been suggesting.

But in order that the minds of young persons may, without labour or difficulty, be gradually brought into such a state of preparation as to be benefited by such a little course of lectures as we have recommended, they should, from the time when they were first able to read, have been employing themselves, at their leisure hours, in laying in a store of provision for their present demands. And here the memory may be employed to good purpose; for being the first faculty which is ripened, and which is indeed perfected when the others are only beginning to unfold themselves, this is an intimation of Providence that it should be the first seized on for the best uses. It should, therefore, be devoted to lay in a stock of the more easy and devotional parts of Scripture, especially the Psalms.* Children, whose minds have been early well furnished from these, will be competent at nine or ten years old to produce from them, and to select with no contemptible judgment, suitable examples of all the parts of prayer; and will be able to extract and appropriate texts under each respective head, so as to exhibit, without help, complete specimens of every part of prayer. By confining them entirely to the sense, and nearly to the words of Scripture, they will be preserved from enthusiasm, from irregularity, and conceit. By being obliged continually, to apply for themselves, they will get a habit in all their difficulties, of 'searching the Scriptures,' which may be hereafter useful to them on other and more trying occasions. But I would at first *confine* them to the Bible; for were they allowed with equal freedom to ransack other books with a view to get helps to embellish their little compositions, or rather compilations, they might be tempted to pass off for their own what they pick up from others, which might tend at once to make them both vain and deceitful. This is a temptation to which they are too much laid open, when they find themselves extravagantly commended for any pilfered passage with which they decorate their little themes and letters. But in the present instance there is no danger of any similar deception, for there is such a sacred signature stamped on every Scripture phrase, that the owner's name can never be defaced or torn off from the goods, either by fraud or violence.

It would be well, if in those Psalms which children were first directed to get by heart, an eye were had to this their future application; and that they were employed, but without any intimation of your subsequent design, in learning such as may be best turned to this account. In the hundred and thirty-ninth, the first great truth to be imprinted on the young heart, the Divine omnipresence, as was before observed, is unfolded with such a mixture of majestic grandeur, and such an interesting variety of intimate and local circumstances, as is likely to seize on the quick and lively feeling of youth. The awful idea that that Being whom they are taught to reverence is not only in *general* 'acquainted with all their ways,' but that He is 'about their path, and about their bed,' bestows such a sense of real and present existence on Him, of whom they are apt to conceive as having his distant habitation only in heaven, as will greatly help to realize the sense of his actual presence.

The hundred and third Psalm will open to the mind rich and abundant sources of expression for gratitude and thanksgiving, and it includes the acknowledgment of spiritual as well as temporal favours. It illustrates the compassionate mercies of God by familiar tenderness and exquisite endearment, as are calculated to strike

* This will be so far from spoiling the cheerfulness, or impeding the pleasures, of childhood, that the Author knows a lady, who, when a little girl, before she was seven years old, had learnt the whole Psalter through a second time; and that without any diminution of uncommon gaiety of spirits, or any interference with the elegant acquirements suited to her station.

upon every chord of filial fondness in the heart of an affectionate child. The fifty-first supplies an infinite variety of matter in whatever relates to confession of sin, or to supplication for the aids of the Spirit. The twenty-third abounds with captivating expressions of the protecting goodness and tender love of their heavenly Father, conveyed by pastoral imagery of uncommon beauty and sweetness: in short, the greater part of these charming compositions overflows with materials for every head of prayer.

Children who, while they were engaged in learning these Scriptures, were not aware that there was any specific object in view, or any farther end to be answered by it, will afterwards feel an unexpected pleasure arising from the application of their petty labours, when they are called to draw out from their little treasury of knowledge the stores they have been insensibly collecting; and will be pleased to find that, without any fresh application to study, they are now obliged to exercise a higher faculty than memory, they have lying ready in their minds the materials with which they are at length called upon to work. Their judgment must be set about selecting one, or two, or more texts, which shall contain the substance of every specific head of prayer before noticed; and it will be a farther exercise to their understandings to concatenate the detached parts into one regular whole, occasionally varying the arrangement as they like; that is, changing the order, sometimes beginning with invocation, sometimes with confession; sometimes dwelling longer on one part, sometimes on another. As the hardships of a religious Sunday are often so pathetically pleaded, as making one of the heavy burdens of religion; and as the friends of religion are so often called upon to mitigate its intolerable rigours, by recommending pleasant employment, might not such an exercise as has been here suggested assist, by varying its occupations, to lighten its load!

The habits of the pupils being thus early formed, their memory, attention, and intellect being bent in a right direction, and the exercise invariably maintained, may we not reasonably hope that their *affections* also, through Divine grace, may become interested in the work, till they will be enabled 'to pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also?' They will now be qualified to use a well-composed form, with seriousness and advantage; for they will now use it not mechanically, but rationally. That which before appeared to them a mere mass of good words, will now appear a significant composition, exhibiting variety, regularity, and beauty; and while they will have the further advantage of being enabled, by their improved judgment, to distinguish and select for their own purpose such prayers as are more judicious and more scriptural, it will also habituate them to look for plan, and design, and lucid order, in other works.

CHAP. XI.

Of Perseverance in Prayer and Praise.

A DEEP sense of his corruptions will powerfully draw the real penitent to a humble avowal of sin; but it is to be feared that there are some, who, because they cannot charge themselves with flagrant offences, do not consider a contrite confession of the sins of the heart and of the daily life an indispensable part of their devotions. But God will charge many with sin who neglect to charge themselves. Did they attend to the remonstrances of a conscience not laid asleep by neglect, or quieted by palliatives, they would find, that, were the daily *omissions* alone, whether in prayer or conduct, of even their best days registered and presented to them, they would form no inconsiderable catalogue for repentance.

There are too many who do not consider that all sins are equally a breach of the Divine law. Without pretending to bring all sins, small and great, to one common level, we should remember that *all* sin is an offence against a gracious Father.

In that profoundly self-abasing prayer of David, after the commission of the two black offences which disgraced his otherwise exemplary life, though he deeply felt his barbarous treatment of his brave general, in first dishonouring his wife, and then exposing him to meet inevitable death in the fore front of the hottest battle, —yet, in praying to be delivered from this 'blood-guiltiness,' he bequeathed an important lesson to posterity, when, in his lowly prostration at the throne of God, his first cry was, 'Against *Thee*, *Thee* only, have I sinned, and done this evil in *Thy* sight, plainly declaring, that all sin is, in the first instance, a sin against God.

While the most worldly are ready enough to exclaim against notorious sins, or against any sins carried to the greatest excess, to smaller offences they contrive to be tolerably reconciled. They think the commission of these not inconsistent with the profitable use of prayer in their formal way of using this customary exercise.

They are also sufficiently lenient to certain degrees of great sins; and various are the modifications and distinctions in their logic, and not over-correct the gradations in their moral scale of degrees. They do not consider that it is the extirpation, and not merely the reduction, of any sin, which is to procure them that peace and comfort for which they sometimes pray, and which they wonder they do not receive as an answer to their prayers.

They forget that the evil of sin is not to be measured by its mangnitude only, but by the spirit of disobedience which it indicates towards a generous Father,—a Father whose commands are all founded in mercy and love, and who considers every voluntary fault as no light offence when committed against supreme power exercised with perfect tenderness.

But it is their reluctance to part with the remaining degrees, their wish to retain these modified sins; it is their favourite reserves to which they still cling, that prevent that peace which is promised to the victory, I had almost said to the omnipotence of prayer.

For it is not so much the nicely measured quantity, as to the nature of sin which constitutes its malignity, and obstructs the benefit of

prayer. The inferior degree which is cherished, will, without earnest supplication to God, be ready to become the excess which is deprecated, whenever the appropriate temptation shall present itself. For, however our compassionate Father may pardon the unpremeditated fault, yet how can we expect Him to forgive any degree of sin that is allowed, that is even, in a certain measure, intended to be committed? Diminution, however, is a favourable step, if, by perseverance in prayer, it lead gradually to extirpation. And this naturally leads to the important subject of Perseverance in Prayer.

Prayer is an act which seems to be so prepared in the frame of our nature, to be so congenial to our dependent condition, so suited to our exigencies, so adapted to every man's known wants, and to his possibilities of wants unknown, so full of relief to the soul, and of peace to the mind, and of gladness to the heart; so productive of confidence in God, and so reciprocally proceeding from that confidence, that we should think, if we did not know the contrary, that it is a duty which scarcely required to be enjoined; that he who had once found out his necessities, and that there was no other redress for them, would spontaneously have recourse, as a delight, to what he had neglected as a command; that he who had once tasted the bounties of God, would think it a hardship not to be allowed to thank him for them; that the invitation to pray to his Benefactor, was an additional proof of Divine goodness, that to be allowed to praise Him for his mercies, was itself a mercy.

The Apostle's precept, 'Pray always,'—pray evermore, pray without ceasing, men ought always to pray,—will not be criticised as a pleonasm, if we call to remembrance that there is no state of mind, no condition of life, in which prayer is not a necessity as well as an obligation. In danger, fear impels to it: in trouble, we have no other resource; in sickness, we have no other refuge; in dejection, no other hope; in death, no other comfort.

Saint Paul frequently shows the word *prayer* to be a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercouse with God. He represents it to include our adoration of his perfections, our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, our obligation for his benefits, providential and spiritual; the avowal of our entire dependence on Him, our absolute subjection to Him, the declaration of our faith in Him, the expression of our devotedness to Him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities, and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants, and for the pardon of our offences; for succour in our distress; for a blessing on our undertakings; for the direction of our conduct, and the success of our affairs.

If any should be disposed to think this general view too comprehensive, let him point out which of these particulars prayer does not embrace; which of these clauses a rational, a sentient, an enlightened, a dependent being can omit in his scheme of devotion.

But as the multifarious concerns of human life will necessarily occasion a suspension of the exercise, the Apostle, ever attentive to the principle of the act, and to the circumstances of the actor, reduces all these qualities to their essence when he resolves them into *the spirit* of supplication.

To pray, incessantly, therefore appears to be, in his view of the subject, to keep the mind in an habitual disposition and propensity to devotion; for there is a sense in which we may be said to *do* that which we are *willing* to do, though there are intervals of the thought as well as intermissions of the act,—'as a traveller,' says Dr. Barrow, 'may be said to be still on his journey, though he stops to take needful rest, and to transact necessary business.' If he pause, he does not turn out of the way; his pursuit is not diverted, though occasionally interrupted.

Constantly maintaining the disposition, then, and never neglecting the actual duty; never slighting the occasion which presents itself, nor violating the habit of stated devotion, may, we presume, be called 'to pray without ceasing.' The expression 'watching unto prayer,' implies this vigilance in finding, and this zeal in laying hold on these occasions.

The success of prayer, though promised to all, who offer it in perfect sincerity, is not so frequently promised to the cry of distress, to the impulse of fear, or the emergency of the moment, as to humble continuance in devotion; it is to patient waiting, to assiduous solicitation, to unwearied importunity, that God has declared that he will lend his ear, that he will give the communication of his Spirit, that he will grant the return of our requests. Nothing but this holy perseverance can keep up in our minds a humble sense of our dependence. It is not by a mere casual petition, however passionate, but by habitual application, that devout affections are excited and maintained, that our converse with Heaven is carried on. It is by no other means that we can be assured, with Saint Paul, that 'we are risen with Christ,' but this obvious one, that we thus seek the things which are above; that the heart is renovated, that the mind is lifted above this low scene of things; that the spirit breathes in a purer atmosphere; that the whole man is enlightened, and strengthened, and purified; and that the more frequently, as the more nearly, he approaches to the throne of God. He will find also that prayer not only expresses but elicits the Divine grace.

Yet do we not allow every idle plea, every frivolous pretence to divert us from our better resolves? Business brings in its grave apology pleasure its bewitching excuse.—But if we would examine our hearts truly, and report them faithfully, we should find the fact to be, that disinclination to this employment, oftener than our engagement in any other, keeps us from this sacred intercourse with our Maker.

Under circumstances of distress, indeed, prayer is adopted with comparatively little reluctance; the mind which knows not where to fly, flies to God. In agony, nature is no Atheist. The soul is drawn to God by a sort of natural impulse; not always, perhaps, by an emotion of piety, but from a feeling conviction that every other refuge is 'a refuge of lies.' Oh! thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, happy if thou art either drawn or driven,

with holy David, to say to thy God, 'Thou art a place to hide me in.'

But if it is easy for the sorrowing heart to give up a world, by whom itself seems to be given up, there are other demands for prayer equally imperative. There are circumstances more dangerous, yet less suspected of danger, in which, though the call is louder, it is less heard; because the voice of conscience is drowned by the clamours of the world. Prosperous fortunes, unbroken health, flattering friends, buoyant spirits, a spring-tide of success,—these are the occasions when the very abundance of God's mercies is apt to fill the heart till it hardens it. Loaded with riches, crowned with dignities, successful in enterprise; beset with snares in the shape of honours, with perils under the mask of pleasures; then it is, that to the already saturated heart 'to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant,' is more in unison, than 'what shall I render to the Lord?'

Prayer draws all the Christian graces into its focus. It draws charity, followed by her lovely train, her forbearance with faults, her forgiveness of injuries, her pity for errors, her compassion for want. It draws Repentance, with her holy sorrows, her pious resolutions, her self-distrust. It attracts Faith, with her elevated eye, —Hope, with her grasped anchor,—Beneficence with her open hand,—Zeal, looking far and wide to serve,—Humility, with introverted eye, looking at home. Prayer, by quickening these graces in the heart, warms them into life, fits them for service, and dismisses each to its appropriate practice. Prayer is mental virtue; virtue is spiritual action. The mould into which genuine prayer casts the soul is not effaced by the suspension of the act, but retains some touches of the impression till the act is repeated.

When we consider how profusely God bestows, and how little He requires; that while He confers like Deity, He desires only such poor returns as can be made by indigent, mendicant mortality; that He requires no costly oblation; nothing that will impoverish, but, on the contrary, will inconceivably enrich the giver. When we consider this, we are ready to wonder that He will accept so poor a thing as impotent gratitude for immeasurable bounty. When we reflect, that our very desire to pray and to praise Him is His gift;—that His grace must purify the offering, before He condescends to receive it, must confer on it that spirit which renders it acceptable;—that He only expects we should consecrate to Him what we have received from Him;—that we should only confess, that of all we enjoy, nothing is our due;—we may well blush at our insensibility.

We think, perhaps, that had He commanded us 'to do some great thing,' to raise some monument of splendour, some memorial of notoriety and ostentation, something that would perpetuate our own name with His goodness, we should gladly have done it.—How much more when He only requires

'Our thanks how due!'

when He only asks the homage of the heart, the expression of our dependence, the recognition of His right!

But he to whom the duty of prayer is unknown, and by whom the privilege of prayer is unfelt, or he by whom it is neglected, or he who uses it for form and not from feeling, may probably say, Will this work, wearisome even if necessary, never know an end? Will there be no period when God will dispense with its regular exercise? Will there never be such an attainment of the end proposed, as that we may be allowed to discontinue the means?

To these interrogatories there is but one answer, an answer which shall be also made, by an appeal to the enquirer himself.

If there is any day in which we are quite certain that we shall meet with no trial from Providence, no temptation from the world, any day in which we shall be sure to have no wrong tempers excited in ourselves, no call to bear with those of others, no misfortune to encounter, and no need of Divine assistance to endure it, on that morning we may safely omit prayer.

If there is any evening in which we have received no protection from God, and experienced no mercy at his hands; if we have not lost a single opportunity of doing or receiving good, if we are quite certain that we have not once spoken unadvisedly with our lips, nor entertained one vain or idle thought in our heart, on that night we may safely omit to praise God, and to confess our own sinfulness; on that night we may safely omit humiliation and thanksgiving. To repeat the converse would be superfluous.

When we can conscientiously say, that religion has given a tone to our conduct, a law to our actions, a rule to our thoughts, a bridle to our tongue, a restraint to every evil temper, then, some will say, 'We may safely be dismissed from the drudgery of prayer, it will then have answered all the ends which you so tiresomely recommend.' So far from it, we really figure to ourselves, that if we could hope to hear of a human being brought to such perfection of discipline, it would unquestionably be found that this would be the very being who would continue most perseveringly in the practice of that devotion, which had so materially contributed to bring his heart and mind into so desirable a state, who would most tremble to discontinue prayer, who would be most appalled at the thought of the condition into which such discontinuance would be likely to reduce him. Whatever others do, he will continue forever to 'sing praises unto Thee, O Thou most Highest; he will continue to tell of Thy loving kindness early in the morning, and of Thy truth in the night season.'

It is true that while he considered religion as something nominal and ceremonial, rather than as a principle of spirit and of life, he felt nothing encouraging, nothing refreshing, nothing delightful in prayer. But since he began to feel it as the means of procuring the most substantial blessings to his heart; since he began to experience something of the realization of the promises to his soul, in the performance of this exercise, he finds there is no employment so satisfactory, none that his mind can so little do without; none that so effectually raises him above the world, none that so opens his eyes to its empty shadows, none which can make him

look with so much indifference on its lying vanities; none that can so powerfully defend him against the assaults of temptation, and the allurements of pleasure, none that can so sustain him under labour, so carry him through difficulties; none that can so quicken him in the practice of every virtue, and animate him in the discharge of every duty.

An additional reason why we should live in the perpetual use of prayer, seems to be that our blessed Redeemer, after having given both the example and the command, while on earth, condescends still to be our unceasing intercessor in Heaven. Can we ever cease petitioning for ourselves, when we believe that He never ceases interceding for us?

If we are so unhappy as now to find little pleasure in this holy exercise, that, however, is so far from being a reason for discontinuing it, that it affords the strongest argument for perseverance. That which was at first a form, will become a pleasure; that which was a burden, will become a privilege; that which we impose upon ourselves as a medicine, will become necessary as an aliment, and desirable as a gratification. That which is now short and superficial, will become copious and solid. The chariot wheel is warmed by its own motion. Use will make that easy which was at first painful. That which is once become easy will soon be rendered pleasant. Instead of repining at the performance we shall be unhappy at the omission. When a man recovering from sickness attempts to walk, he does not discontinue the exercise because he feels himself weak, nor even because the effort is painful. He rather redoubles his exertion; it is from his perseverance that he looks for strength. An additional turn every day diminishes his repugnance, augments his vigour, improves his spirits. That effort which was submitted to because it was salutary, is continued because the feeling of renovated strength renders it delightful.

But if prayer be so exhilirating to the soul, what shall be said of praise? Praise is the only employment, we had almost said, it is the only duty, in which self finds no part. In praise we go out of ourselves, and think only of Him to whom we offer it. It is the most purely disinterested of all services. It is gratitude without solicitation, acknowledgment without petition. Prayer is the overflowing expression of our wants, praise, of our affections. Prayer is the language of the destitute, praise of the redeemed, sinner. If the angelic spirits offer their praises exempt from our mixture of infirmity or alloy, yet we have a motive for gratitude, unknown even to the angels. They are unfallen beings; they cannot say as we can, 'Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us.' Prayer is the child of faith; praise of love. Prayer is prospective; praise takes in, in its wide range, enjoyment of present, remembrance of past, and anticipation of future blessings. Prayer points the only way to heaven, 'praise is already there.'

CHAP. XII.

On Intercessory Prayer.

As it is the effect of prayer to *expand* the affections as well as to *sanctify* them, the benevolent Christian is not satisfied to commend himself alone to the Divine favour. The heart which is full of the love of God will overflow with love to his neighbour. All that are near to himself he wishes to bring near to God. He will present the whole human race as objects of the Divine compassion, but especially the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Religion makes a man so liberal of soul, that he cannot endure to restrict any thing, much less divine mercies, to himself: he, therefore, spiritualizes the social affections, by adding intercessory to personal prayer: for he knows that petitioning for others is one of the best methods of exercising and enlarging our own love and charity, even if it were not to draw down those blessings which are promised to those for whom we ask them.

It is unnecessary to produce any of the numberless instances with which Scripture abounds, on the efficacy of intercession: in which God has proved the truth of his own assurance, that 'his ear was open to their cry.' I shall confine myself to a few observations on the benefits it brings to him who offers it. When we pray for the objects of our dearest regard, it purifies passion, and exalts love into religion: when we pray for those with whom we have worldly intercourse, it smooths down the swellings of envy, and bids the tumult of anger and ambition subside: when we pray for our country, it sanctifies patriotism: when we pray for those in authority, it adds a Divine motive to human obedience: when we pray for our enemies, it softens the savageness of war, and mollifies hatred into tenderness, and resentment into sorrow. There is no such softener of animosity, no such soother of resentment, no such allayer of hatred, as sincere cordial prayer. And we can only learn the duty so difficult to human nature of forgiving those who have offended us, when we bring ourselves to pray for them to Him whom we ourselves daily offend. When those who are the faithful followers of the same Divine Master pray for each other, the reciprocal intercession delightfully realizes that beautiful idea of 'the communion of Saints.' There is scarcely any thing which more enriches the Christian than the circulation of this holy commerce; than the comfort of believing, while he is praying for his Christian friends, that he is also repaying the benefit of their prayers for him.

Some are for confining their intercessions only to the good, as if none but persons of merit were entitled to our prayer. Good! who is good? 'There is none good but one, that is God.' Merit! who has it? Desert! who can plead it? in the sight of God, I mean. Who shall bring his own piety, or the piety of others, in the way of *claim*, before a Being of such transcendant holiness, that 'the heavens are not clean in his sight?' And if we wait for perfect holiness as a preliminary prayer, when shall such erring creatures pray *at all* to Him 'who chargeth the angels with folly?'

The social affections were given us not only for the kindliest, but the noblest purposes. The charities of father, son, and brother, were bestowed, not only to make life pleasant, but to

make it useful; not only that we might contribute to the present comfort, but to the eternal benefit of each other.

These heaven-implanted affections are never brought into exercise more properly, nor with more lively feelings, than in intercessory prayer. Our friends may have wants which we cannot remove, desires which we cannot gratify, afflictions which we cannot relieve, but it is always in our power to bring them before God; to pray for them whenever we pray for ourselves. This, as it is a most pleasant and easy, so it is an indispensable obligation. It is a duty which brings the social affections into their highest exercise, and which may be reciprocally paid and received.

The same Scriptures which expressly enjoin that supplication, prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks be made for all men, furnish also numerous examples of the efficacy of intercessory prayer. We need not dwell on the instance of the rain obtained by the prayers of Elijah, or the earlier availing intercessions of Moses, with other public deliverances effected in the same manner.

Though the perseverance of Abraham's prayer did not prevent the extermination of the polluted city, yet doubtless the blessing he solicited for it returned unto his own bosom, and the successive promises made by the Almighty Judge to the successively reduced number of the righteous, for whose sake the petition for preservation was offered, affords a proof of the Divine approbation and a striking encouragement to persist in the duty of intercessory prayer. The promise of God was withdrawn. The prayer was conditional, and could the petitioner have made up his very lowest compliment, the city had been saved. The interceding heart in any event is sure to gain something for itself.

Prayer is such an enlarger of the affections, such an opener of the heart, that we cannot but wonder how any who live in the practice of it, should be penurious in their alms; or, if they do give, should do it 'grudgingly or of necessity.' Surely if our prayer be cordial, we shall be more ready to assist as well as to love those for whom we are in the habit of making supplication to God. It is impossible to pray sincerely for the well-being of others, without being desirous of contributing to it. We can hardly conceive a more complete species of self-deception than that practised by an avaricious professor of religion, one who goes on mechanically to pray for the poor, whilst his prayer has neither opened his heart nor his purse. He may value himself on this, as on other instances of his ingenuity, in having found out so cheap a way of doing good, and go on contentedly, till he hears that tremendous sentence of exclusion, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.'

> O impudence of Wealth! with all thy store,
> How dar'st thou let one worthy man be poor?

O you great ones of the earth, whom riches ensnare and prosperity betrays—be largely liberal, even from self-insterest. Not, indeed, expecting to make the liberality you bestow a remuneration for the devotions you withhold. Scatter your superfluities, and more than your superfluities, to the destitute, if not to vindicate Providence, yet to benefit yourselves. Not, indeed, to revive the old pious fraud of depending for salvation on the prayers of others; yet still you may hope to be repaid, with usurious interest, from the pious poor, by the very tender charity of their prayers for you. Their supplications may possibly be so heard, that you may at length, be brought to the indispensable necessity, and the bounden duty of praying for yourselves.

There is a generosity in religion. The same principle which disposes a Christian to contribute to the temporal interests of those he loves, inclines him to breathe his earnest supplication for their spiritual benefit. Not only does prayer for others promote natural affection, not only does it soften the heart of him who intercedes, but it is hoped that they for whom the intercession is made, may reap the benefit.

But our intercession must neither dwell in generalities for the public nor in limitations to the wants of our particular friends. The Christian is the friend of every description of the children of mortality. In the fulness of our compassion for the miseries of mankind, we pour out our hearts in prayer for the poor and destitute, and we do well. But there is another and a large class who are still more the objects of our pity, and consequently should be of our prayers. While we pray for those who have no portion in this world, do we not sometimes forget to pray for those who have their whole portion in it? We pray for the praying servants of God, but perhaps we neglect to pray for those who never pray for themselves. These are the persons who stand most in need of the mercy of the Almighty, and of our Christian importunity in their favour.

Is it not affecting, that even unto our devotions we are disposed to carry the regard we too highly indulge of the good things of this life, by earnestly imploring mercy upon those who want them; and by forgetting to offer our supplications in favour of those who are blinded by the too full enjoyment of them. If the one duty be done, should the other be left undone?

If we want an example of the most sublime kind of Charity, observe for what it is that the great Apostle of the Gentiles 'bows his knees to God' in behalf of his friends. Is it for an increase of their wealth, their power, their fame, or any other external prosperity?—No: it is that 'God would grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inner man;'—it is, 'that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith;'—it is that 'they may berooted and grounded in love,' and this to a glorious end,—'that they may be able with all Saints, to comprehend' the vast dimensions of the love of Christ;—that 'they may be filled with all the fulness of God.' These are the sort of petitions which we need never hesitate to present. These are requests which we may rest assured are always agreeable to the Divine will; here we are certain we cannot 'pray amiss.' These are intercessions of which the benefit may be felt, when wealth, and fame, and power, shall be forgotten things.

Why does Saint Paul 'pray day and night

that he might see the face of his Thessalonian converts?' Not merely that he might have the gratification of once more beholding those he loved,—though that would sensibly delight so affectionate a heart,—but 'that he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith.'

These are instances of a spirit so large in its affections, so high in its object; of a man who had so much of Heaven in his friendships, so much of soul in his attachments, that he thought time too brief, earth too scanty, worldly blessings too low, to enter deeply into his petitions for those to whom time and earth, the transitory blessings of life, and life itself, would so soon be no more.

In exciting us to perpetual gratitude, the same Apostle stirs us up to the duty of keeping before our eyes the mercies which so peremptorily demand it. These mercies succeed each other so rapidly, or rather, are crowded upon us so simultaneously, that if we do not count them as they are received, and record them as they are enjoined, their very multitude, which ought to penetrate the heart more deeply, will cause them to slip out of the memory.

As to the commanded duty of praying for our enemies, the most powerful example bequeathed to us in Scripture, next to that of his Divine master on the cross, is that of St. Stephen. Even *after* the expiring martyr had ejaculated 'Lord Jesus receive my spirit,' he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice 'Lord lay not this sin to their charge.' Let every instance of Roman greatness of mind, let every story of Grecian magnanimity be ransacked, and produce, who can, such another example. Theirs is tumour, this is grandeur; theirs is heroism, this is Christianity; they implored the gods for themselves, Stephen for his murderers.

In closing the subject of Intercessory Prayer, may the author be allowed to avail herself of the feeling it suggests to her own heart? and, while she earnestly implores that Being who can make the meanest of his creatures instrumental to His glory, to bless this humble attempt to the reader, may she, without presumption, intreat that this work of Christian charity may be reciprocal, and that those who peruse these pages may put up a petition for her, that, in the great day, to which we are all hastening, and to which she is so very near, she may not be found to have suggested to others what she herself did not believe, or to have recommended what she did not desire to practice? In that awful day of everlasting decision, may both the reader and the writer be pardoned and accepted, 'not for any works of righteousness which they have done,' but through the merits of the GREAT INTERCESSOR.

CHAP. XIII.

The Practical Results of Prayer Exhibited in the Life of the Christian in the World.

As the keeping up a due sense of religion, both in faith and practice, so materially depends on the habit of fervent and heart-felt devotion, may we be permitted, in this place, to insist on the probable effects which would follow the devout and conscientious exercise of prayer, rather than on prayer itself?

As soon as religion is really become the earnest desire of our hearts, it will inevitably become the great business of our lives; the one is the only satisfactory evidence of the other: consequently the religion of the heart and life will promote that Spirit of prayer by which both have been promoted.

They, therefore, little advance the true interest of mankind, who, under the powerful plea of what great things God has done for us in our redemption by His Son, neglect to encourage our active services in His cause. Hear the words of inspiration, 'Be not slothful;' 'run the race;' 'fight the good fight;' 'strive to enter in;' 'give diligence;' 'work out your own salvation;' 'God is not unmindful to forget your labour of love;' 'but when ye have done all, Ye are unprofitable servants, ye have done that which was your duty to do.'

But if, after we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, what shall we be if we have done nothing? Is it not obvious that the Holy Spirit, who dictated these exhortations, clearly meant that a sound faith in the word of God was intended to produce holy exertion for the advancement of His Glory? The activity in doing good of the Son of God was not exceeded by his devotion, and both powerfully illustrated his doctrines, and confirmed his divinity. Until then we make our religion a part of our common life, until we bring Christianity, as an illustrious genius is said to have brought philosophy, from its retreat to live in the world, and dwell among men; until we have brought it from the closet to the active scene, from the church to the world, whether that world be the court, the senate, the exchange, the public office, the private counting-house, the courts of justice, the professional departments, or the domestic drawing-room, it will not have fully accomplished what it was sent on earth to do.

We do not mean the introduction of its language, but of its spirit: the former is frequently as incompatible with public, as it is unsuitable to private business; but the latter is of universal application. We mean that the temper and dispositions which it is the object of prayer to communicate, should be kept alive in society, and brought into action in its affairs. That the integrity, the veracity, the justice, the purity, the liberality, the watchfulness over ourselves, the candour towards others, all exercised in the fear of the Lord, and strengthened by the word of God and prayer, should be brought from the retirement of devotion to the regulation of the conduct.

There may be a form of unfelt petitions, a ceremonious avowal of faith, a customary profession of repentance, a general acknowledgment of sin, uttered from the lips to God; but where is his image and superscription written upon the heart? Where is the transforming power of religion in the life?—Where is the living transcript of the Divine original? Where is that holiness to which the vision of the Lord is specifically promised? Where is the light,

and life, and grace of the Redeemer exhibited in the temper and conduct? Yet we are assured, that if we are Christians, there must be a constant aim at this conformity.

We should, therefore, endeavour to believe as we pray, to think as we pray, to feel as we pray, and to act as we pray. Prayer must not be a solitary, independent exercise; but an exercise incorporated with many, and inseparably connected with that golden chain of Christian duties, of which, when so connected, it forms one of the most important links. *They* will not *pray* differently from the rest of the world, who do not *live* differently.

But though we must not, in accommodation to the prevailing prejudices and unnecessary zeal against abstinence and devotion, neglect the imperative duties of retirement, prayer, and meditation; yet, perhaps, as prayer makes so indispensable an article in the Christian life, some retired contemplative persons may apprehend that it makes the whole; whereas prayer is only the operation which sets the machine going. It is the sharpest spur to virtuous action, but not the act itself. The only infallible incentive to a useful life, but not a substitute for that usefulness. Religion keeps her children in full employment. It finds them work for every day in the week, as well as on Sundays.

The praying Christian, on going into the world, feels that his social and religious duties are happily comprised in one brief sentence—'I will *think* upon thy commandments to do them.' What the Holy Spirit has so indissolubly joined, he does not separate.

As the lawyer has his compendium of cases and precedents; the legislator his statutes; the soldier his book of tactics; and every other professor his *vade mecum* to consult in difficulties; the Christian to whichever of the professions he may belong, will take his morning lecture from a more infallible directory, comprehending not only cases and precedents, but abounding with those seminal principles which contain the essence of all actual duty, from which all practical evidence is deducible. This spirit of laws differs from all other legal institutes, some of which, from that imperfection inseparable from the best human things, have been found unintelligible, some impracticable, and some have become obsolete. The divine law is subject to no such disadvantages: it is perfect in its nature, intelligible in its construction, and eternal in its obligation.

This sacred institute he will consult in the spirit of prayer, not occasionally, but daily. Unreminded of general duty, unfurnished with some leading hint for the particular demand, he will not venture to rush into the bustle, trial, and temptation of the day. Of this aid he will possess himself with the more ease, and less loss of time, as he will not have to ransack a multiplicity of folios for a detached case, or an individual intricacy; for, though he may not find in the Bible specific instances, yet he will discover in every page some governing truth, some rule of universal application, the spirit of which may be brought to bear on almost every circumstance; some principle suited to every purpose, and competent to the solution of every moral difficulty.

Scripture does not, indeed, pretend to include technical or professional peculiarities, but it exhibits the temper and the conduct which may be made applicable to the special concerns of every man, whatever be his occupation. He will find in it the right direction to the right pursuit; the straight road to the proper end; the duty of a pure intention; and the prohibition of false measures to attain even a laudable object. No hurry or engagement will ever make him lose sight of that sacred aphorism, so pointedly addressed to men of business, 'He that *maketh haste* to be rich shall hardly be innocent.'—The cautionary texts which he admired in his closet, he will not treasure up as classical mottos to amuse his fancy, or embellish his discourse; but will adopt as rules of conduct, and bring them into every worldly transaction, whether commercial, forensic, medical, military, or whatever else be his professed object. He will not adjust his scale of duty by the false standard of the world, nor by any measure of his own devising; he has but one standard of judging, but one measure of conduct,—the infallible Word of God. This rule he will take as he finds it, he will use as he is commanded; he will not bend it to his own convenience; he will not accommodate it to his own views, his own passions, his own emolument, his own reputation.

He whose heart has been set in motion by prayer, who has had his spiritual pulse quickened by a serious perusal of the Holy Scriptures, will find his work growing upon him in regular proportion to his willingness to do it. He is diligently exact in the immediate duties of the passing day. Though procrastination is treated by many as a light evil, he studiously avoids it, because he has felt its mischiefs; he is active even from the love of ease, for he knows that the duties which would have cost him little, if done on the day they were due, may, by the accumulation of many neglected days, cost him much. The fear of this rouses him to immediate exertion. If the case in question be doubtful, he deliberates, he inquires, he prays; if it be clear and pressing, what his hand finds to do, he does with all his might, and in the calls of distress he always acts on his favourite aphorism,—that giving soon is giving twice.

Abroad how many duties meet him! He has on his hands the poor who want bread, the afflicted who want comfort, the distressed who want counsel, the ignorant who want teaching, the depressed who want soothing. At home he has his family to watch over. He has to give instruction to his children, and an example to his servants. But his more immediate, as well as more difficult work is with himself, and he knows that this exercise, well performed, can alone enable him wisely to perform the rest. Here he finds work for every faculty of his understanding, every conquest over his will, for every affection of his heart. Here his spirit truly labours. He prays fervently, but he has to watch, as well as to pray, that his conscience be not darkened by prejudice; that his bad qualities do not assume the shape of virtues, nor his good ones engender self-applause; that his best intentions do not mislead his judgment; that his

candour do not degenerate into indifference; nor his strictness into bigotry; that his moderation do not freeze, nor his zeal burn. He has to controul his impatience at the defeat of his most wisely conceived plans. He will find that in his best services there is something that is wrong, much that is wantings; and he feels, that whatever in them is right, is not his own, but the gift of God.

Is your Christian, then, perfect? you will perhaps ask. Ask himself. With deep and sincere self-abasement he will answer in the negative. He will not only confess more failings than even his accusers ascribe to him, but he will own what they do not always charge him with,—sins. He will acknowledge that there is no natural difference between himself and his censurer, but that through Divine grace, the one prays and struggles against those corruptions, the very existence of which the other does not suspect.

There is nothing more humbling to the confirmed praying Christian than that whilst in his happier moments he is able to figure to himself a cheering image of the glory of the Redeemer, the blessedness of the redeemed, the beauty of Christian perfection; to feel himself not only awakened, but exalted; not merely enlightened, but kindled; almost possessing, rather than anticipating Heaven;—while he is enabled, in a joyful measure, to meditate upon these things, to feel his mind ennobled, and his soul expanded by the contemplation, yet to find how soon the bright ideas fade, the strong impression is effaced, the heavenly vision vanished; he mourns to reflect, that he does not more abidingly possess in his heart, that he does not more powerfully exhibit in his conversation, more forcibly display in his life, that spirit of which his mind has been sometimes so full, his heart so enamoured, when prostrate before his Maker.

To his grief he finds that his most perfect obedience is incomplete, that his warmest affections are often languid, perhaps his best intentions not realized, his best resolves not followed up. In this view, though he is abased in dust and ashes in looking up to God as the fountain of perfection, he is cheered in looking up to him also as the fountain of mercy in Christ Jesus. He prays, as well as strives, that the knowledge of his own faults may make him more humble, and his sense of the divine mercies more grateful.

But he will feel that his faith, even though it does not want sincerity, will too frequently want energy. He has, therefore, to watch against cold and heartless prayer; though, perhaps, the humility arising from this consciousness is a benefit in another way. He feels it difficult to bring every 'thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,' yet he goes on cheerily, willing to believe that what may be difficult is not impossible. He has to struggle against over anxiety for temporal things. He has to preserve simplicity of intention, consistency, and perseverance. He has, in short, to watch against a long list of sins, errors, and temptations, which he will find heavier in weight, and more in number, the more closely he looks into his catalogue.

The praying Christian in the world has, above all, to watch against the fear of man, as he may find it more easy to endure the cross than to despise the shame. Even if he have in a good degree conquered this temptation, he may still find a more dangerous enemy in the applause of the world than he found in its enmity. An eager desire of popularity is, perhaps, the last lingering sin which cleaves even to those who have made a considerable progress in religion, the still unextinguished passion of a mind great enough to have subdued many other passions.

The devout Christian endeavours to exemplify the emphatical description of the translated Saint in the Old Testament, 'he *walks* with God.' He does not merely bow down before his footstool at stated intervals: he does not ceremoniously address Him on great occasions only, and then retreat, and dwell at a distance; but he *walks* with him; his habitual intercourse, his natural motion, his daily converse, his intimate communication, is with his Redeemer. He is still seeking, though it may be with slow and faltering steps, the things which are above; he is still striving, though with unequal progress, for the prize of his high calling, he is still looking though with a dim and feeble eye, for glory, honour, and immortality; he is still waiting, though not with a trust so lively as to annihilate the distance, to see his eternal redemption drawing nigh. Though his aims will always be far greater than his attainments, yet he is not discouraged. His hope is above, his heart is above, his treasure is above: no wonder, then, that his prayers are directed, and a large portion of his wealth sent forward thither, where he himself hopes soon to be. It is but transmitting his riches of both kinds, not only to his future, but his everlasting home.

The grand danger of the Christian in the world is *from* the world. He is afraid of the sleek, smooth, insinuating, and not discreditable vices; he guards against self-complacency. If his affairs prosper, and his reputation stands high, he betakes himself to his only sure refuge, the throne of God; to his only sure remedy, humble prayer. He knows it is more easy to perform a hundred right deeds, and to keep many virtues in exercise, than 'to keep himself unspotted from the world,' than to hold the things of the world with a loose hand. Even his best actions, which may bring him most credit, have their dangers; they make him fear that 'while he has a name to live, he is dead.'

He feels that if he had no sin but vanity, the consciousness of that alone, would be sufficient to set him on his guard, to quicken him in prayer, to caution him in conduct.—He does not fear vanity as he fears any other individual vice; as a single enemy against which he is to be on the watch, but as that vice which, if indulged, would poison all his virtues. Among the sins of the inner man, he knows that 'this kind goeth not out but by prayer.' When he hears it said of any popular, and especially of any religious character, 'he is a good man, but he is vain.' He says within himself, he is vain, and therefore, I fear he is not a good man. How many right qualities does vanity rob of their value, how many right actions of their reward!

Every suspicion of the first stirring of vanity in himself, sends him with deeper prostration before his Maker. Lord what is man! shall the praise of a fellow-creature, whose breath is in his nostrils, whose ashes, must soon be mingled with my own, which may even before my own be consigned to kindred dust, shall *his* praise be of sufficient potency to endanger the humility of a being, who is not only looking forward to the applause of those glorious spirits which surround the throne of God, but to the approbation of God himself?

When those with whom he occasionally mixes, see the praying Christian calm and cheerful in society, they little suspect the frequent struggles, the secret conflicts he has within. Others see his devout and conscientious life, but he alone knows the plague of his own heart. For this plague he seeks the only remedy; to prayer, that balm of hurt minds, he constantly repairs.

The confirmed Christian will above all labour most assiduously after that *consistency of character*, which is a more unequivocal evidence of high Christian attainment, than the most prominent great qualities, which are frequently counteracted by their opposites. This consistency exhibits a more striking conformity to the image of his Maker; as in the works of creation, the wisdom of the Supreme Intelligence is more admirable in the agreement and harmony of one thing with another, than in the individual beauty and excellence of each. It is more conspicuous, in the fitness and proportion of its parts relatively, than in the composition of the parts themselves. By this uniformity, the results of religion are the most beautifully exhibited in the Christian character.

When we reflect on the conflicts and the trials of the conscientious, watchful, praying Christian, we shall estimate aright the value of the consoling promises of the gospel. It is by these promises, applied through Divine grace to the heart, that the Christian is gradually brought to consider prayer, not merely as a duty, but to value it as a privilege; and the more earnestly he cultivates this spirit of supplication, the more deeply will it enable him to penetrate into the recesses of his own heart. The more he discovers the evils which he there finds, he will be so far from being deterred by the discovery from approaching to the fountain of mercy, that it will lead him to be more diligent, as well as more fervent in his application there. Nothing so faithfully reveals to us our spiritual exigencies, nothing can quicken our petitions for their relief so powerfully, as the conviction of their actual existence. In this conviction, in this earnest application, the Christian at length feels the efficacy of prayer in its consolations, its blessedness, its transforming power.

CHAP. XIV.

The Consolations of Prayer in Affliction, Sickness, and Death.

The Pagan philosophers have given many admirable precepts, both for resigning blessings, and for sustaining misfortunes; but, wanting the motives and sanctions of Christianity, though they excite much intellectual admiration, they produce little practical effect. The stars which glittered in their moral night, though bright, imparted no warmth. Their most beautiful dissertations on death had no charm to extract its sting. We receive no support from their most elaborate treatises on immortality, for want of Him who 'brought life and immortality to light.' Their consolatory discussions could not strip the grave of its terrors; for to them it was not 'swallowed up in victory.' To conceive of the soul as an immortal principle, without proposing a scheme for the pardon of its sins, was but cold consolation. Their future state was but a happy guess: their Heaven but a fortunate *conjecture*.

When we peruse their finest compositions, we admire the manner in which the medicine is administered, but we do not find it effectual for the cure, nor even for the mitigation of our disease. The beauty of the sentiment we applaud, but our heart continues to ache.

To this cold scepticism let us oppose the heart-consoling, exhilirating, triumphant *certainties* of Christianity. 'I *know* that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth—In my flesh I shall see God, whom mine eyes shall behold and not another'—'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.'—Here is the true balm of Gilead—here is the healing cordial for every human woe!

The hair-splitting casuist does not directly say that pain is not an evil, but by a sophistical turn professes that philosophy will never *confess* it to be an evil. But what consolation does the sufferer draw from this quibbling nicety?

Christianity knows none of these fanciful distinctions. She never pretends to insist that pain is not an evil, but she does more; she converts it into a good. Christianity, therefore, teaches a fortitude as much more noble than philosophy, as meeting pain with resignation to the hand that inflicts it, is more heroic than denying it to be an evil.

'I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh unto me,' says the Almighty, by his prophet. We must, therefore, when we approach him in our devotions, frequently endeavour to warm our hearts, raise our views, and quicken our aspirations with a recollection of His glorious attributes,—of that omnipotence which can give to all without the least deduction from any, or from Himself; of that ubiquity which renders Him the constant witness of our actions: of that omniscience which makes Him a discerner of our intentions, and which penetrates the most secret disguises of our inmost souls; of that perfect holiness which should at once be the object of our adoration, and the model of our practice; of that truth which will never forfeit any of His promises; of that faithfulness which will never forsake any that trust in Him; of that love which our innumerable offences cannot exhaust; of that eternity which had place 'before the mountains were brought forth;' of that grandeur which has set His glory above the heavens; of

that long-suffering of God, who is strong and patient, and who is provoked every day; of that justice which will by no means clear the guilty, yet of that mercy which forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin; of that compassion which *waits* to be gracious; of that goodness which *leadeth* to repentance; of that purity which, while it hates sin, invites the sinner to return.

In seasons of distress and trial, whether from the loss of health, or under whatever other afflictive dispensation he may be struggling, the Christian will endeavour to draw consolation, by reviewing the mercies of his past life, and anticipating the glorious promises of the life to come. If previously accustomed to unbroken health, he will bless God for the long period in which he has enjoyed it. If continued infirmity has been his portion, he will feel grateful that he has had such a long and gradual weaning from the world. From either state he will extract consolation. If pain be new, what a mercy to have hitherto escaped it! If habitual, we bear more easily what we have borne long.

He will review his temporal blessings and deliverances; his domestic comforts, his Christian friendships. Among his mercies, his now 'purged eyes' will reckon his difficulties, his sorrows, and his trials. A new and heavenly light will be thrown on that passage, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' It seems to him as if hitherto he had only heard it with the hearing of his ear, but now 'his eye seeth it.' If he be a real Christian, and has had enemies, he will always have prayed for them; but now he will be thankful for them. He will the more earnestly implore mercy for them, as instruments which have helped to fit him for his present state. He will look up with holy gratitude to the Great Physician, who, by a Divine chemistry, in mixing up events, has made that one unpalatable ingredient, at the bitterness of which he once revolted, the very means by which all things have worked *together* for good; had they worked separately, they would not have worked efficaciously.

If our souls have been truly 'sanctified by the word of God and Prayer,' we shall, under the sharpest trials, be apt to compare our own sufferings with the cup which our Redeemer drank for our sakes; drank to avert the Divine displeasure from us. Let us pursue the comparative view of our condition with that of the Son of God. *He* was deserted in his most trying hour, deserted probably by those whose limbs, sight, life, he had restored; whose souls he had come to save. *We* are surrounded by unwearied friends; every pain is mitigated by sympathy; every want not only relieved, but prevented: the 'asking eye' explored; the inarticulate sound interpreted; the ill-expressed wish anticipated; the but suspected want supplied. When *our* souls are 'exceeding sorrowful,' *our* friends participate our sorrow; when desired to 'watch' with us, they watch, not '*one* hour,' but *many;* not 'falling asleep,' but both flesh and spirit ready and willing; not forsaking us in our 'agony,' but sympathizing where they cannot relieve.

The night also will be made to the praying Christian a season of heart-searching thought, and spiritual consolation. Solitude and stillness completely shut out the world, its business, its cares, its impertinences. The mind is sobered, the passions are stilled; it seems to the watchful Christian, as if there were in the universe only God and his own soul. It is an inexpressible consolation to him to feel that the one Being in the universe who never slumbereth nor sleepeth, is the very Being to whom he has free access, even in the most unseasonable hours. The faculties of the mind may not, perhaps, be in their highest exercise; but the affections of the heart, from the exclusion of distracting objects, more readily ascend to their *noblest* object. Night and darkness are no parasites; conscience is more easily alarmed. It puts on fewer disguises. We appear to ourselves more what we really are. This detection is salutary. The glare which the cheerful daylight, business, pleasure, and company, had shed over all objects, is withdrawn. Schemes, which, in the day, had appeared plausible, now present objections. What had then appeared safe, now, at least seems to require deliberation. This silent season of self-examination is a keen detector of any latent sin, which, like the fly in the box of perfume, may corrupt much that is pure.

When this communion with God can be maintained, it supplies deficiencies of devotion to those who have little leisure during the day; and by thus rescuing these otherwise lost hours, it snatches time from oblivion, at once adds to the length of life, and weans from the love of it.

If the wearied and restless body be tempted to exclaim, 'Would to God it were morning!' the very term suggests the most consoling of all images. The quickened mind shoots forward beyond this vale of tears, beyond the dark valley and shadow of death; it stretches onward to the joyful morning of the Resurrection; it anticipates that blessed state where there is no more weeping and no more night; no weeping, for God's own hand shall wipe away the tears; no night, for the Lamb himself shall be the light.

If humbling doubts of his own state depress the real penitent, what comfort may he not derive from the assurance, that the acceptable sacrifice to the God of love, is the troubled spirit, and the broken and contrite heart?

It is a further encouragement to Prayer to the dejected spirit, that the Almighty was not contented to show his willingness to pardon by single declarations, however strong and full. He has heaped up words, he has crowded images, he has accumulated expressions, he has exhausted language, by all the variety of synonymes which express love, mercy, pardon, and acceptance. They are graciously crowded together, that the trembling mourner who was not sufficiently assured by one, might be encouraged by another. And it is the consummation of the Divine goodness, that this message is not sent by his ambassador, but that the King of kings, the blessed and only Potentate, condescends himself to pronounce this royal proclamation, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin!' Forgiving indeed, but in consonance

with his just demand of repentance and reformation, 'who will by no means clear the guilty.'

Refuse not, then, to take comfort from the promises of God, when, perhaps, you are easily satisfied with the assurance of pardon from a frail and sinful creature like yourself whom you had offended. Why is God the only being who is not believed? who is not trusted? 'O Thou that hearest Prayer, why unto Thee will not all flesh come?'

In the extremity of pain, the Christian feels there is no consolation but in humble acquiescence in the Divine will. It may be that he can pray but little, but that little will be fervent. He can articulate, perhaps, not at all, but his prayer is addressed to one who sees the heart; who can interpret its language; who requires not words, but affections. A pang endured without a murmur, or only such an involuntary groan as nature extorts, and faith regrets, is itself a Prayer. We have a striking instance of an answer to silent Prayer, in the case of Moses. In a situation of extreme distress, when he had not uttered a word, 'the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy crying.'

If, however, in the conduct of this nightly watching, and this nightly Prayer, our own stock of thought or expression be absolutely deficient, prophets and apostles will not only afford us the most encouraging examples, but the most profitable assistance. More especially the royal treasury of King David lies open to us; and whatever are our wants, there our resources are inexhaustible. The Psalms have supplied to all ages materials for Christian worship, under every supposable circumstance of human life. They have facilitated the means of negociation for the penitent, of gratitude for the pardoned. They have provided confession for the contrite, consolation for the broken hearted, invitation to the weary, and rest for the heavy laden. They have furnished petitions for the needy, praise for the grateful, and adoration for all. However indigent in himself, no one can complain of want, who has access to such a magazine of intellectual and spiritual wealth. These variously gifted compositions not only kindle the devoutest feelings, but suggest the aptest expressions: they invest the sublimest meanings with the noblest eloquence. They have taught the tongue of the stammerer to speak plainly; they have furnished him who was ready to perish for lack of knowledge, with principles as well as feelings; they have provided the illiterate with the form, and the devout with the spirit of prayer. To him who previously felt not his wants, they have imparted fervent desires; they have inspired the faint with energy, and the naturally dead with spiritual life.

The Psalms exhibit the finest specimen of experimental and devotional religion in the world. They are attended with this singular advantage, and this unspeakable comfort; that in them God speaks to us, and we speak to Him. 'Seek ye my face; Thy face, Lord will I seek.' This delightful interlocution between the king of saints and the penitent sinner; this interchange of character; this mixture of prayer and promise; of help implored, and grace bestowed; of weakness pleaded, and strength imparted; of favour shown, and gratitude returned; of prostration on one part, and encouragement on the other; of abounding sorrow, and overflowing mercy: this beautiful variety of affecting intercourse between sinful dust and infinite goodness, lifts the abased penitent into the closest and most sublime communion with his Saviour and his God.

The royal poet in these noble compositions has given us the most elevated character of Prayer, by showing us that supplication is the dialect of the poor in spirit; thanksgiving the idiom of the genuine Christian; praise, his vernacular tongue.

* * * * * * *

How cheering under every species of distress to reflect, that our blessed Redeemer not only suffered for us upon the cross, but is sympathizing with us now! that 'in all our afflictions He is afflicted.' The tenderness of the sympathy seems to add a value to the sacrifice; while the vastness of the sacrifice endears the sympathy by ennobling it.

If the intellectual powers be mercifully preserved, how many virtues may be brought into exercise on a sick bed, which had either lain dormant, or been considered of inferior worth in the prosperous day of activity. The Christian temper, indeed, seems to be that part of religion which is more peculiarly to be exercised under these circumstances. The passive virtues, the least brillant, but the most difficult, are then particularly called into action. To *suffer* the whole will of God on the tedious bed of languishing, is more trying than to perform the most shining exploit on the theatre of the world; the hero in the field of battle has the love of fame, as well as patriotism to support him. He knows that the witnesses of his valour will be the heralds of his renown. The martyr at the stake is divinely strengthened. Extraordinary grace is imparted for extraordinary trials. His pangs are exquisite, but they are short. The crown is in sight; it is almost in possession. By faith 'he sees the heavens opened. He sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. But to be strong in faith, and patient in hope, in a long and lingering sickness, is an example of more general use, and ordinary application, than even the sublime heroism of the martyr. The sickness is brought home to our own feelings; we see it with our eyes; we apply it to our hearts. Of the martyr, we read, indeed, with astonishment: our faith is strengthened, and our admiration kindled; but we read it without that special appropriation, without that peculiar reference to our own circumstances which we feel in cases that are likely to apply to ourselves. With the dying friend, we have not only a feeling of pious tenderness; but here is also a community of interests. The certain conviction that his case must soon be our own, makes it our own now. Self mixes with the social feeling, and the Christian death we are contemplating, we do not so much admire as a prodigy, as propose for a model. To the martyr's stake we feel that we are not likely to be brought. To the dying bed we must inevitably come.

Accommodating his state of mind to the na-

ture of his disease, the dying Christian will derive consolation in any case, either from thinking how forcibly a sudden sickness breaks the chain which binds him to the world, or how gently a gradual decay unties it. He will feel and acknowledge the necessity of all he suffers to wean him from life. He will admire the Divine goodness which commissions the infirmities of sickness to divest the world of its enchantments, and to strip death of some of its most formidable terrors. He feels with how much less reluctance we quit a body exhausted by suffering, than one in the vigour of health.

Sickness, instead of narrowing the heart, its worst effects on an unrenewed mind, enlarges his. He earnestly exhorts those around him to defer no act of repentance, no labour of love, no deed of justice, no work of mercy, to that state of incapacity in which he now lies.

How many motives has the Christian to restrain his murmurs! Murmuring offends God, both as it is injurious to his goodness, and as it perverts the occasion which God has now afforded for giving an example of patience. Let us not complain that we have nothing to do in sickness, when we are furnished with the opportunity, as well as called to the duty of resignation; the duty, indeed, is always ours, but the occasion is now more eminently given. Let us not say, even in this depressed state, that we have nothing to be thankful for. If sleep be afforded, let us acknowledge the blessing; if wearisome nights be our portion, let us remember they are 'appointed to us.' Let us mitigate the grievance of watchfulness, by considering it as a sort of prolongation of life; as the gift of more minutes granted for meditation and prayer. If we are not able to employ it to either of these purposes, there is a fresh occasion for exercising that resignation which will be accepted for both.

If reason be still continued, yet with sufferings too intense for any devotional duty, the sick Christian may take comfort that the business of life was accomplished before the sickness began. He will not be terrified if duties are superseded; if means are at an end; for he has nothing to do but to die. This is the act for which all other acts, all other duties, all other means, will have been preparing him. He who has long been habituated to look death in the face, who has often anticipated the agonies of dissolving nature; who has accustomed himself to pray for support under them, will now feel the blessed effect of those petitions, which have been long treasured in heaven. To those anticipatory prayers he may, perhaps, now owe the humble confidence of hope in this inevitable hour. Habituated to the contemplation, he will not, at least, have the dreadful addition of surprise and novelty to aggravate the trying scene. It has long been familiar to his mind, though hitherto it could only operate with the inferior force of a picture to a reality. He will not, however, have so much scared his imagination by the terrors of death, as invigorated his spirit by looking beyond them to the blessedness which follows. Faith will not so much dwell on the opening grave, as shoot forward to the glories to which it leads. The hope of Heaven will soften the pangs which lie in the way to it. On Heaven, then, he will fix his eyes rather than on the awful intervening circumstances. He will not dwell on the struggle which is for a moment, but on the crown which is forever. He will endeavour to think less of death than of its conqueror; less of the grave than of its spoiler; less of the body in ruins than of the spirit in glory; less of the darkness of his closing day than of the opening dawn of immortality. In some brighter moments, when viewing his eternal redemption drawing nigh, as if the freed spirit had already burst its prison walls, as if the manumission had actually taken place, he is ready exultingly to exclaim, 'My soul is escaped, the snare is broken, and I am delivered.'

Eternal things now assume their proper magnitude, for he beholds them in the true point of vision. He has ceased to lean on the world, for he has found it both a reed and a spear; it has failed, and it has pierced him. He leans not on himself, for he has long known his own weakness. He leans not on his virtues, for his renewed mind has shown him that they can do nothing for him. Had he no better refuge, he feels that his sun would set in darkness; his life close in despair.

He suffers not his thoughts to dwell on life. His retrospections are at an end. His prospects as to this world are at an end also. He commits himself unreservedly to his heavenly Father. But though secure of the port, he may still dread the passage. The Christian will rejoice that his rest is at hand; the man may shudder at the unknown transit. If faith is strong, nature is weak. Nay, in this awful exigence, strong faith is sometimes rendered faint through the weakness of nature.

At the moment when his faith is looking round for every additional confirmation, he may rejoice in those blessed certainties, those glorious realizations which Scripture affords. He may take comfort that the strongest attestations given by the apostles to the reality of the heavenly state were not conjectural. They, to use the words of our Saviour, spake what they knew, and testified what they had seen. 'I reckon,' says St. Paul, 'that the afflictions of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.' He said this *after* he had been caught up into the third Heaven; *after* he had beheld the glories to which he alludes. The author of the Apocalyptic vision having described the ineffable glories of the new Jerusalem, thus puts new life and power into his description, 'I John, *saw* these things and *heard* them.'

The power of distinguishing objects increases with our approach to them. The Christian feels that he is entering on a state where every care will cease, every fear vanish, every desire be fulfilled, every sin be done away, every grace perfected. Where there will be no more temptations to resist, no more passions to subdue; no more insensibility to mercies, no more deadness in service, no more wandering in Prayer, no more sorrow to be felt for himself, nor tears to be shed for others. He is going where his devotion will be without languor; his love without alloy; his doubts, certainty; his expectation, en-

joyment, as hope, fruition. All will be perfect, for God will be all in all.

The period at length arrives when we must summon all the fortitude of the rational being, all the resignation of the devout Christian. The principles we have been learning, the prayers we have uttered, must now be made practical. The speculations we have admired, we must now realize. All that we have been studying was in order to furnish materials for this grand exigence. All the strength we have been collecting must now be brought into action. We must now draw to a point all the scattered arguments, all the several motives, all the individual supports, all the cheering promises of Christianity. We must exemplify all the rules we have given to others; we must embody all the resolutions we have formed for ourselves; we must reduce our precepts to experience; we must pass from discourses on submission to its exercise; from dissertations on suffering to sustaining it. We must heroically call up the determination of our better days. We must recollect what we have said of the supporters of faith and hope when our strength was in full vigour, when our heart was at ease, and our mind undisturbed. Let us collect all that remains to us of mental strength. Let us implore the aid of holy hope and fervent faith to show that religion is not a beautiful theory, but a soul-sustaining truth.

Let us endeavour without harassing scrutiny, or distressing doubt, to act on the principles which our sounder judgment formerly admitted. The strongest faith is wanted in the hardest trials. Under those trials, to the confirmed Christian, the highest degree of grace is commonly imparted. Let us not impair that faith on which we rested when our mind was strong, by suspecting its validity now it is weak. That which had our full assent in perfect health, which was then firmly rooted in our spirit, and grounded in our understanding, must not be unfixed by the doubts of an enfeebled reason, and the scruples of an impaired judgment. We may not be able to determine on the reasonableness of propositions, but we may derive strong consolation from conclusions which were once fully established in our mind.

Even if prayer were as worthless, with respect to present advantages, and religion as burthensome as some suppose, it would be a sufficient vindication of both that they lead to eternal bliss. Of the precise nature of that bliss, the Scripture account is calculated rather to quicken faith than gratify curiosity. There the appropriate promises to spiritual beings are purely spiritual. It is enough for believers to know that they shall be for ever with the Lord; and though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like Him. In the vision of the Supreme Good, there must be supreme felicity. Our capacities of knowledge and happiness shall be commensurate with our duration. On earth, part of our enjoyment—a most fallacious part—consists in framing new objects for our wishes; in heaven there shall remain in us no such disquieting desires, for all which *can* be found we shall find in God. We shall not know our Redeemer by the hearing of the ear, but we shall see Him as he is; our knowledge, therefore, will be clear, because it will be intuitive.

It is a glorious part of the promised bliss, that the book of prophecy shall be realized; the book of providence displayed, every mysterious dispensation unfolded, not by conjecture, but by vision. In the grand general view of Revelation, minute description would be below our ideas; circumstantial details would be disparaging; they would debase what they pretend to exalt. Those sublime negatives—'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him;' fill the soul with loftier conceptions of eternal joys than all the elaborate but degrading delineations which have been sometimes attempted. We cannot conceive the blessings prepared for us, until he who has prepared reveal them.

If, indeed, the blessedness of the eternal world could be described, new faculties must be given us to comprehend it. If it could be conceived, its glories would be lowered, and our admiring wonder diminished. The wealth that can be counted has bounds; the blessings that can be calculated have limits. We now rejoice in the expectation of happiness inconceivable. To have conveyed it to our full apprehension, our conceptions of it must then be taken from something with which we are already acquainted, and we should be sure to depreciate the value of things unseen, by a comparison with even the best of the things which are seen. In short, if the state of heaven were attempted to be let down to human intelligence, it would be far inferior to the glorious but indistinct glimpses which we now catch from the oracles of God, of joy unspeakable, and full of glory. What Christian does not exult in the grand outline of unknown, unimagined, yet consummate bliss—In THY presence is the fulness of joy, and at *Thy* right hand are pleasures for evermore?

THE END.

MAR 8 1918

VALUABLE WORKS

PUBLISHED BY J. J. WOODWARD,

No. 7 Minor Street, between Market and Chesnut, and 5th and 6th Streets, Philadelphia.

HUNTER'S SACRED BIOGRAPHY; or THE HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS, 1 vol. 8vo. with engravings. To which is added, the history of Deborah, Ruth, and Hannah; being a Course of *Lectures*, by *Henry Hunter, D. D.* Fifth American Edition, complete in 1 vol. 8vo. *Stereotyped.*

HANNAH MORE'S WORKS. The works of Hannah More, with a Sketch of her Life, complete in 2 vols. 8vo. with a portrait; containing her Epitaphs, Ballads, and Tales; Hymns, Bible Rhymes, Sacred Dramas, Stories for Persons of the Middle Rank, Allegories, Tales, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, Practical Piety, Hints for forming the Character of a young Princess, Christian Morals, Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of St. Paul, Coelebs in Search of a Wife, Foreign Sketches, Reflections on Prayer, Spirit of Prayer, &c. &c.

This most valuable work has passed through several editions in the United States, and is now *Stereotyped.*

RIPPON'S HYMNS. A Selection of Hymns, from the best authors, including a great number of originals, intended to be *An Appendix* to Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns, by *John Rippon, D. D.* Woodward's revised and corrected Edition, with the names of the Tunes adapted to the hymns; from the last London edition, together with an appendix, from the Olney Hymns, with additional Hymns, original and selected, by the Rev. *William Staughton, D. D. Stereotyped.*

FOX'S BOOK OF MARTYRS, imperial 8vo. (being as large as a small quarto,) with seven Plates, executed by the best Artists on steel and copper. This book contains a complete History of the lives, sufferings, and deaths of the Christian Martyrs, from the commencement of Christianity to the present period; to which is added an account of *The Inquisition*, the Bartholomew Massacre in France, the general persecution under Louis XIV.; the Massacres in the Irish Rebellion, in the years 1641 and 1798; rise, progress, and persecution of the people called Quakers, &c. &c. &c. with the Lives of the most eminent Reformers. Revised and improved by the Rev. JOHN MALHAM, and re-edited by the Rev. T. Pratt, D. D. This edition of Fox, is the MOST POPULAR ONE EXTANT, has a very large type, and is well calculated for *old people. Stereotyped.*

PALEY'S WORKS, complete in 1 vol. 8vo. *Stereotyped.* The works of *William Paley, D. D.* Archdeacon of Carlisle, containing his Life, Moral and Political Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Tracts, Horæ Paulinæ, Clergyman's Companion, and Sermons, printed verbatim, from the original edition, and ornamented with splendid Steel Plates.

N. B. This is a most valuable edition of Paley, and as the price is remarkably low will no doubt be introduced into almost every library.

BUCK'S THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, in 1 vol. 8vo. containing definitions of all religious terms; a comprehensive view of every article in the system of Divinity; an impartial account of all the principal denominations which have existed in the religious world, from the birth of Christ to the present day: by the late Rev. Charles Buck, D. D. Woodward's new edition, published from the last London edition, *without* any *omission* or *abridgment*, being a *genuine edition*, and containing a most valuable Appendix, giving an account of the *Methodist* and *Presbyterian Churches* in the United States; said accounts being had from the leading *members of each society*, may be received as impartial. *Stereotyped.*

Same work, Royal 12mo. very cheap.

Same work, in 18mo. on a new and beautiful type, well calculated for a pocket companion. *Stereotyped.*

STURM'S REFLECTIONS, 1 vol. 8vo. a new and elegant edition, on a large type, and fine paper, with engravings. *Stereotyped.*

BUNYAN'S WORKS, containing *Grace abounding* to the Chief of Sinners, Heart's Ease in heart trouble, the World to come; or, Visions of Heaven and Hell, and the Barren Fig Tree. With engravings. *Stereotyped.*

POPE'S POETICAL WORKS, 1 vol. 8vo. splendid steel plates.

The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope, Esq. to which is prefixed THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR, by Dr. *Johnson.* This edition is made to correspond with other Poetical Works, published in 1 vol. 8vo. for libraries. *Stereotyped.*

THE SPECTATOR, complete in 1 vol. 8vo. with plates. With notes, and a General Index, from the London Stereotype edition. Made to correspond with other library works, in octavo. *Stereotyped.*

THE TATLER AND GUARDIAN, complete in 1 vol. 8vo. with splendid steel plates. The Tatler, with Notes and general Index, and the Guardian, with Notes and general Index, complete in one elegant 8vo. vol. making about 700 pages, to match Spectator and other library works, 8vo.

N. B. From the very extensive demand for the Spectator, it was justly inferred, that the Tatler, and Guardian, or similar works by many of the same writers, would be acceptable, and the extensive demand for it since published has fully sustained that opinion. *Stereotyped.*

ARABIAN NIGHTS, in 1 vol. with 12 elegant engravings, carefully revised and corrected from the *Arabic;* to which is added, a Selection of New Tales, now first translated from the Arabic Originals. Also, an *Introduction*, illustrating the Religion, Manners, and Customs of the *Mahommedans*, by *Jonathan Scott*, L. L. D. (Oxford.)

MERCER'S CLUSTER. The Cluster of Spiritual Songs, Divine Hymns, and Sacred Poems, being chiefly a collection, by *Jesse Mercer*, Minister of the Gospel, Washington, Georgia. Fifth Edition corrected.

THE BRITISH DRAMA, being a collection of the most esteemed TRAGEDIES, COMEDIES, OPERAS and FARCES, in the *English Language;* to be illustrated with splendid steel portraits of MISS O'NIEL, MRS. SIDDONS, &c. &c. executed by the first artists. The work contains over 1,600 pages, in 2 vols. 8vo. and is published on superfine paper. *Stereotyped.*

NEWTON ON THE PROPHECIES, 1 vol. 8vo. The long established reputation of Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, and the continued demand for the work, which claims a place in every Theological library, has encouraged the publication of this new and elegant edition; revised by the Rev. *W. S. Dobson, A. M.* London. The work is published on a new and large type, and fine paper, and to insure its accuracy, has been *Stereotyped.*

BRITISH ESSAYISTS, in 2 vols. 8vo. The British Essayists, containing elegant copies of the Spectator, and Tatler and Guardian, with Notes and General Index; forming a beautiful and interesting library work, with splendid steel and copper engravings. *Stereotyped.*